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TEN SHORT STORIES



TEN SHORT STORIES

FROM THE BIBLE

BY

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TO MY NEPHEW
REYNOLDS THOMAS
A LOVER OF STORIES

FOREWORD

We are all fond of stories, children and grown-ups alike. The child will say, "Tell me a story." The moment you finish, if it was a good one, he will say, "Now tell me another." And the grown-ups, drawing fiction from the public libraries (ten times as much of it as of any other single form of literature) and flocking by hundreds of thousands to the moving-picture show seven days in the week, are saying the same thing—"Tell us a story and another and another." The people, taking them by and large, are never quite fed up on stories.

The writers of this generation have done much to bring the short story into fine literary form. In order to be good, the short story must be something more than clever and entertaining. It must show us a situation real as life and clear-cut as a barn door. It must give us the sense of movement, swift, decisive, interesting. It must reach some suitable climax, rounding it out to a finish.

The short story when it is well written is a veritable work of art. And on this side of the water Bret Harte and Richard Harding Davis, O. Henry

and Wilbur Steele, in England Sir Conan Doyle, and, best of them all perhaps, Rudyard Kipling, have made the short story a very significant factor in our popular literature.

Here is the Bible also, completed eighteen hundred years ago, and through all these centuries far and away "the best seller" on the market, filled to the brim with short stories! Many of these stories are true in that they conform to the facts of actual occurrence; and many of the others are no less true in that they conform to the facts of human nature. They may be purely the creations of the moral imagination, like the Parables of Jesus or the stories of the sun standing still, of Jonah, and of the three Hebrew boys cast into the fiery furnace, but they are none the less true stories. They are true to life, true to our deepest need, true to our highest aspiration, true in the sense that the lessons they contain, if we follow them, will get us where we ought to go in personal character and in social well-being. Heaven be praised for the short stories of the Bible!

These stories are well told. Long before they were reduced to writing, they had been handed on from lip to lip until they were slowly wrought into fine literary form. And they are not old—they are as fresh and vital as if they had been written last month for "The Century," for "Scribner's

Magazine," or for the "Saturday Evening Post," except that many of them are better than anything commonly found in these publications. In this little book I wish to relate and discuss "Ten Short Stories" from the Bible.

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THE MAN WHO SCORNEO "SAFETY FIRST"

TEN SHORT STORIES

I

THE MAN WHO SCORNE "SAFETY FIRST"

IN these recent years the prudential motive has certainly been worked for all it was worth. Men have been urged to fix their eyes anxiously on the main chance. We have had "safety first" urged upon us until the trusting public has all but felt that this must be one of the Ten Commandments. The periodicals of promotion and the schools of business administration have preached such eloquent sermons from the text "Honesty is the best policy" that some of the untaught have actually been hunting for that passage in Holy Scripture.

This emphasis is not entirely without warrant or value. There was something sickly and unwholesome in that extreme unworldliness which scorned ordinary comfort, personal happiness, and

individual development in its devotion to "causes." If a man's right hand or right foot caused him to stumble morally, he cut it off. He made a wise decision, had the option been solely between the degradation of any faculty and its destruction. "It is better to enter into life maimed" than not to enter at all.

But there was a third option, involving that "best" use of one's powers, which entirely transcended the "better." This third option contemplated neither the degradation nor the destruction of any faculty—it meant rather that consecration of all one's faculties and interests to the high ends for which they were originally designed, whereby a man enters into life not maimed, but sound and complete.

The Master of all these higher values did not allow Himself to become dizzy by a rush of altruism to the head. He did not say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, but not thyself." He made an intelligent self-regard and an honest purpose of self-realization the high standard to which our unselfish interest in others should gradually attain. "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself."

The gaining of that which is best for one's self, where there is an overshadowing ultimate purpose determining the final use to be made of such an achievement, is altogether praiseworthy. Yet even so, the moral incompleteness of the appeal to men that they should take vigorous hold of their boot-straps and lift themselves to higher levels of being for the sheer joy of walking there, has made it for the most part an ineffective appeal.

The moral balance-sheet has been "too much with us soon and late"—getting and spending according to a carefully calculated scale of spiritual values, we have laid waste some of our best powers. Here as everywhere the law of indirectness obtains. "He that saves his life, loses it," while the man who loses all thought of his own self-realization in his devotion to certain commanding interests finds his life and keeps it unto life eternal.

Here in this short story was a man who scorned safety first! His name was "Hobab." It sounds like a joke, as if his parents when they named him were trying to be funny with him. It seemed

like taking an unfair advantage of an innocent little baby to name him "Hobab" and start him out to go through life with that sort of tag attached.

What a sorry time he would have at school, in business, in society, at the polls, everywhere!

"Your name, please?"

"Hobab."

"Spell it!"

"H-O-B-A-B—Hobab."

Yet for all his funny name, he showed himself a human being when the time came, and he has a friendly word to say to those who are over-emphasizing the motives of expediency.

This was the situation where Hobab found himself: The Israelites had escaped from the bondage of Egypt. They were wandering about in the wilderness of Sinai, uncertain as to their movements, partly from their ignorance of the region they were to traverse and partly from their fear of the hostile tribes they might encounter. They met this Midianite whose name was Hobab. He knew that whole region like a book.

They said to him, "We are journeying to the

land of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." We are on our way to the land of promise—come along and enjoy it with us!

But he flatly refused. He did not want anybody to do him good or to undertake to place him in some land of promise of their own choosing. Most people are rather touchy about having others "do them good," especially where these friendly souls go about it in that hammer-and-tongs fashion. When such officious well-wishers undertake our spiritual betterment out of hand, we feel moved at once to express a preference for "absent treatment."

"I will not go," Hobab said. "I will depart to mine own country." And that was all there was about it! For the moment it seemed that the incident was closed.

But the Israelites shifted their sails and tried another tack. "We are to encamp in the wilderness," they said. "Come thou with us and thou shall be to us as eyes." It is an unknown country to us—we have not passed this way heretofore. We need a man with the eyes of experience in

his head—one who knows his way about—"Come thou with us and be our guide!"

That was another pair of shoes altogether. Nothing said this time about doing him good or getting him into a land of promise or saving his soul. "Come thou with us, not for your own sake, but for our sakes. We need you."

That found Hobab right where he lived. He accepted their invitation on the spot. He went with them, and under his competent guidance the whole camp of Israelites moved forward toward the goal of their desire.

Religion has been saying to men for years, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good." It is a valid claim. No other single force in human history can be named which has entered so widely, so continuously, and so powerfully into the renewal of man's moral nature, into the shaping of his ultimate ideals, and into the formation of character, as that sense of contact between the human and the divine which we call religion.

It will do any man good and only good to know in his own heart that sense of fellowship between

these finite spirits of ours and the Infinite Spirit of Him who is above all. It purifies and fortifies the inner life. It uncovers deeper sources of motive and stimulus. It steadies and strengthens the will. This is eternal life, life without limit, to know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Religion has a clear right to say to every one, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good."

But the mental attitude and the social emphasis in this modern life of ours are such that this invitation is often—I might say commonly—refused. Say to a man: "Here, you ought to go to church on Sunday and worship God—it will do you good! It will give you better standing in the community. It will open up social opportunities, possibly business opportunities, which otherwise you might miss. It will enrich your own inner life and put you on good terms with the Lord besides." Say that to him, and he is likely to draw away. He does not want the spiritual forces of the community turned loose on him to "do him good."

One might put it in more pungent phrase if he chose—Billy Sunday would. "Repent of your

sins! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and join the church—it will do you good. If you do, you will go to heaven when you die. If you don't, you will go to hell.”

This claim also, in my judgment, is entirely valid. The acceptance of that invitation will be to any man's advantage. But he may reply that he does not believe that there is any such place as hell. He may tell you that he does not want to go to heaven—he wants to go to New York and make a lot of money and have a good time generally. The whole idea of having somebody do him good and save his soul for him, leaves him cold. “Safety first” repels him.

Before the Great War, we had at Yale what were known as “Entry Meetings.” The students on a single entry in one of the dormitories would meet, fifteen or twenty of them, in some fellow's room. They would sit around informally while some instructor talked to them ten or fifteen minutes on some phase of religion or morals. Then for the rest of the forty-five-minute period they would ask questions, talk back, and discuss the

points he had raised. Those meetings, I am sure, had a wholesome influence.

But we had a group of students on one of the entries who refused to have such meetings held in any of their rooms. "We are lost souls," they said; "the pious people have told us so. We are going to the bad; we are an evil influence in the life of the college, and we don't care who knows it. We do not propose to have anybody come in and pray over us." And they shut the door in the face of all that effort, so far as they were concerned, and they shut it with a slam.

Now if their interpretation of the spirit of those meetings had been correct, I am frank to say that I should have had a good deal of sympathy with their attitude. When any one undertakes to pray over us, not to say "at us," in patronizing, supercilious fashion, we resent it. It is poor psychology to say to any one whom we seek to help, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good."

And that mood is no careless whim—it is sound ethics. It is in line with the teaching of the Master. "He that saveth his life shall lose it." The man who is forever doing things for his own

good, looking out for Number One here and hereafter, on the ground that if he does not, nobody will, intent on saving his soul by pious performances, is lost already. He may still be walking about to avoid funeral expenses, but he is dead.

Selfishness is death and damnation, here and now and all the way along. The last thing we want to do is to center a man's interest upon himself and make him intent upon getting into some land of promise to claim his full share of the milk and honey.

Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 't were all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd
But to fine issues; nor Nature never lends
The smallest scruple of her excellence
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
Herself the glory of a creditor,
Both thanks and use.

How about that other line of approach? We

are to encamp in the wilderness. It is unknown country to us. Come thou with us and be to us as eyes. Do it not for your own sake, but for our sakes. We need you. Come and see for us with the eyes of a wider experience, and together we will advance toward the goal of our common desire. When the Israelites took that line with this man Hobab he sat up and listened. When that note was struck he felt the force of it. He went with them and did his bit as a competent guide for their future action.

Here is the church of Christ saying to every man, "You may not feel your need of us, but we feel our need of you." The whole world went to smash ten years ago, not for lack of money or energy or brains—it had all those things in abundance. It went to smash because the spiritual forces of society had not been maintained at their full vigor nor of the right quality. The spirit of greed and of selfish aggression had set its ugly heel upon the spirit of justice and of good will—and the best we had in our white civilization went down in defeat. We have to face that fact whether we like it or not. The spiritual

forces of society, which are the final forces, were not at that time up to the mark.

However one may agree or disagree with some of the theology of the churches, we would all recognize the fact that the church is one of the main agencies through which the divine Spirit has functioned in the life of the world. The church causes men to stand in awe and trust before their Maker. It teaches them to act toward one another in the spirit of an intelligent good will. It urges them to exalt the spiritual values above all manner of material gain. When the roll is called of those forces which make for social betterment, the church cannot be left out.

Now if the church is to fulfil this high purpose in the future, it needs men of strength, of intelligence, of high purpose, to give it power to do its work. It says to every man, "Come thou with us not for your own sake, but for the sake of these larger interests of justice, mercy, and peace between man and man. Thou shalt be to us as eyes and lips, as feet and hands, for the accomplishment of God's gracious purpose for the race."

We too are encamped in the wilderness. The

face of Europe at this time is for the most part a region of dreary sand and bitter waters. The spirit of fear, of distrust, of hatred between man and man, between class and class, between race and race, between land and land, is far worse than anything the Israelites encountered in the wilderness of Moab.

Here in our own land as well, the social unrest, the open, flippant disregard for law in many quarters, the flat contempt which many people show for the higher, finer values in life—all this suggests not some outlying section of the land of promise; it suggests, rather, a desert of discouragement!

No man in his senses these days hears anybody singing, "God's in His heaven; All's right with the world." God may be in his heaven—I hope so,—but all is not right with the world.

Every section of human life is crying out for men of vision and insight! Come thou with us and be to us as eyes! Show us the way, and walk in it at the head of an advancing column! "The night is dark and we are far from home—lead thou us on!"

If the spirit of greed and of selfish aggression is to be replaced by the spirit of friendliness and coöperation; if the great industrial order is to be moralized as we have moralized other important interests; if the commerce of the world is to be no longer the selfish squabble of a lot of hungry animals for the best bones, but a noble section of the spiritual life of the race; if the political life of our large cities is to be redeemed from the hands of the tricksters and the grafters; if the nations of earth are to be set in a great brotherhood of high endeavor for the common good—if these high ends, which are imperative for our common salvation, are to be achieved, then strong men, wise men, good men must take hold together and show us the way! If any one is living a thoughtless, careless, selfish life, may God in heaven help him to hear the needs of the world saying at this hour, "Come thou with us, not for your own sake, but for our sakes! We need you."

Here is something larger and more vital than your personal salvation or mine or his! It was a man without a bit of nonsense about him who said

once, "I could wish myself accursed for Israel's sake." He was an Israelite himself, and he was willing to be damned, if need be, provided only that the honor and welfare of his race might thereby be assured.

The salvation of any nation is achieved by the massing together of those bits of devotion, heroism, and high purpose which individual men contribute. It is that larger consideration, rather than some private dream of personal salvation, which weighs with men of sense.

If I should go down street asking every man I met, "Don't you feel your need of Christ?" most of them, if they were entirely frank, would say, "No, I cannot say that I do." They would be thinking purely in terms of personal interest.

Let me put it in another way! Suppose that each one of those men was the father of a ten-year-old boy, and that I asked him to think now in terms of the boy's life! "Don't you wish that the bill-boards of our theaters and moving-picture shows had a cleaner look as they spread themselves out before the eyes of that boy? Don't you wish that the newspapers which are laid before us

morning after morning, had a higher tone? Don't you wish that the workaday world into which he must go presently and do his own bit was dominated by better aims and methods? Don't you wish that the whole fabric of our social life had a finer quality in it? Don't you wish that the civic life of our communities offered him a clearer chance for the achievement of citizenship?"

If I should put my query in that form, I am sure that every man's reply would be, "Yes, God bless the little chap! I do wish that the world was a better place for him and for all the ten-year-olds to grow up in." Let that be each man's sense of need of Him who alone can change all that by changing the hearts of the men who are responsible!

The kingdom of heaven will come, with you or without you—the Lord God Almighty will see to that. He has not taken on a load so heavy that He will not be able to bring it in. But if any man stands aloof in selfish fashion, withholding his share of the spiritual energy which is to transform all these kingdoms of human interest into kingdoms of his spirit, then the shame will be his.

He will hear that historic reproach uttered by a group of soldiers. They came out of a battle spent, depleted, blood-stained, but victorious. And they called out to a lot of cowards who had been saving their skins, "Go hang yourselves—we fought the battle through and won it, and you were not there."

I am a college man, but I am bound to say that there is a deal of selfishness these days in all of our colleges. On every campus there are young people so short-sighted that they cannot see six inches beyond the ends of their own small noses. How much am I going to get out of it? What will this course do for me? How much is there in this form of college activity for me? When they come to the chapel, many of them are saying by their mental attitude, "How much information, how many ideas, how much personal thrill will I get out of this preacher's sermon as he hands it out?"

How weak and cheap it is! It is all in the spirit of that wretched piece of religious doggerel which they used to sing in evangelistic meetings,

“Oh, that will be glory for me, glory for me, glory for me!” It is amazing that the Christian Church did not spew such a song out of its mouth—it was never fit to be sung. “Glory for me! For my sake.” That is the yardstick by which many college men, who are old enough to know better, measure all the goods which are laid before them.

It is a petty, mercenary mood—I wonder that any one can live in it for a single day and not scream from sheer boredom. Even on the basis of that meager philosophy of life I could make quite an appeal for the claims of religion. The young man may not feel his need of God now—the day will come when he will feel that need. The Most High has made us for himself, and any heart is restless until it rests in Him.

The emptiness, the dreariness, the final futility of an irreligious life is like the pathos which attaches to some abandoned house in the country. The godless life comes to look like an old weather-beaten farm-house, with sagging roof and broken windows, inhabited by bats and owls and other strange birds. The rightful inhabitant is not

there, and that is the tragedy of it. For your own sake, I might say, seek Him whom to know, to love, and to obey is life which is life indeed.

But in my use of this story, I put my plea on higher grounds. I am asking every one to come with this spiritual interpretation of life and this mode of unselfish behavior which we call religion, not because it will do him good—I am asking him to do it because the world, stricken and smitten, burdened and depleted by a disaster unspeakable, needs him. It needs for its recovery the best resources he can bring and the best line of action he can put into the field. We are in the wilderness—come thou with us and help.

Years ago, in Battell Chapel at Yale, one of the most chivalrous souls I have ever known preached a sermon from this text, "The Lamb made war with the Beast." The text was not quoted,—we do not find those precise words anywhere in the Bible. It was condensed, so to speak, from that series of glowing pictures in the last book of the Bible. The Lamb made war with the Beast!

The Beast stood for all that is base and mean,

cruel and devilish in human society. It takes upon itself a thousand different shapes and forms in this modern life of ours, but they are all just beastly.

The Lamb stood for all that patience and gentleness, devotion and self-sacrifice, which found their highest historic expression in Jesus Christ, the One who was called "The Lamb of God," the One who was destined to take away the sin of the world.

It seemed a contest most unequal—a lamb lined up against a beast! Yet the plain fact stands that the lamb is winning out over the beast. The baser elements in human life are going to the wall. The men who wear the mark of the beast are being driven off the field in shame. Before those high qualities which shine in their splendor in the Lamb of God, every knee at last shall bow and every tongue shall confess that those high qualities are the lords of life.

For the sake of the world's need of just that victory of the lamb over the beast, let every honest man enlist and hasten the triumph!

THE SOLDIER WHO FOUGHT THE STARS

II

THE SOLDIER WHO FOUGHT THE STARS

HERE is the outline of the story about the man who fought the stars! The northern tribes of Israel were being oppressed by the war-like Canaanites. The feud had become so bitter that the Hebrews who lived on the border were in constant terror—they were frequently slain in their tracks. Whole villages of them had been actually wiped out. It was no longer safe for a Hebrew to travel the main roads. “In the days of Shamgar,” the record says, “the highways were unoccupied and the people went through by-paths.” They went scurrying about here and there in dark, out-of-the-way places like rats, in fear of their lives. The situation had become intolerable.

Then there came an armed revolt of the Israelites against their oppressors. Ten thousand Hebrews under the leadership of Deborah and Barak went

forth to battle with the Canaanites on the plain of Esdraelon.

The commander of the opposing host was a man named Sisera, a brave, soldierly type of man. He had been whipping the poor Israelites up hill and down dale by the use of war-horses and chariots of iron. His troops would ride their enemies down before they could use their own slings and arrows, their swords and their spears, with any effect. Sisera's chariots of iron went over them rough-shod and left them dead upon the field. And into this famous battle on the plain of Esdraelon, Sisera brought nine hundred chariots of iron.

But just as the action opened, there came a frightful storm. The rain came down in torrents and the black loam of that fertile valley was converted into a morass. The heavy war-horses with their huge chariots of iron were unable to charge—they floundered helplessly in the deep mud. The cold rain turned into a cutting sleet. And the sleet, driven by the fierce wind into the faces of the advancing Canaanites, made it impossible for them to use their weapons at all. They

were blinded by the storm until their slings and arrows, their spears and swords were of no more avail than the toys of a child.

The Israelites, on the other hand, with the storm at their backs and their courage heightened by the feeling that all the forces of earth and sky were on their side, fought with unwonted valor. They never turned their backs, but marched breast forward. They drove their enemies back as if they had been so many helpless sheep. They slaughtered the Canaanites, who were vainly trying to use their war-horses and their chariots in that slough of mud. They struck down the foot-soldiers, who could not defend themselves with the sleet driven into their faces and their eyes blinded by the fury of the storm. The Israelites put Sisera's whole army to flight and won that day a notable victory. They felt that their lives had been redeemed from violence and they saw their enemies lick the dust.

Then Sisera, the commander of the defeated army, seeing that everything was lost, like Napoleon at Waterloo, leaped from his chariot and ran for his life. He managed to escape from the mob of fleeing soldiers, and, taking a by-path,

he came to a little village of the Kenites. He passed the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite. The woman stood at the door of her tent, and when she saw the man, exhausted and desperate, she called out to him, "Turn in, my lord, turn in and have no fear!"

He entered the woman's tent, perishing with thirst, after the day of hard fighting, and he said to her, "Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink."

She brought him a bottle of fresh milk. "He asked water and she gave him milk," as the Song of Deborah has it.

Then, wearied by his flight, refreshed by the milk, and reassured by the apparent kindness of the woman, he stretched himself out in the comfort of her tent and sank into a sound sleep.

Then Jael, taking a tent-pin and hammer, crept softly to his side. He was fast asleep, and with one swift, sharp blow, she drove the tent-pin through his head—and the general was no more! His army had been crushed and its leader lay here upon the ground, as dead as a door-nail.

It is not a pretty story. War is never pretty when you see it at arm's length. War is just what General Sherman said it was, whether you find it on the Plain of Esdraelon or at Waterloo, at Gettysburg or in the Argonne. "War is hell," and no amount of poetry or painting will ever take away the moral ugliness of it. The "dogs of war" are all bloodhounds.

It was a cruel, treacherous, devilish trick which the woman played upon that defeated man after she had promised him safety. "Turn in, my lord, turn in and have no fear." It was a wild, rough time and the moral standards were low. When we read in the Triumphal Ode which follows this short story, "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be,"—almost the identical words applied to Mary, the mother of our Lord, in the New Testament,—we realize that we are a long way from home, as measured by the moral distance between the rude standards of that early time and our own Christian ideals.

When the victorious Israelites saw the defeated army, and its heroic leader dead at their feet, they

were sufficiently honest to recognize the fact that their own right arms had not gotten them the victory. Other factors had entered in. Other forces which they did not control had been fighting on their side, and that decided the issue. "The Lord discomfited Sisera," they said, "and all his chariots and all his host." "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." The rain and the wind, the hail and the sleet, coming down out of the skies by no act of theirs, had become their effective allies. They read the muster-roll of that great day clear down to the bottom and clear up to the top—they saw that Sisera had been doomed because he was fighting the stars.

They put their truth in poetic form, but the meaning is plain. In the long run, the main forces of earth and sky are hostile to the whole method of life which Sisera represented. Cruelty, oppression, inhumanity are doomed to defeat anywhere, everywhere, because we live in the presence of a great moral order which ultimately is invincible. When men or nations show themselves persistently cruel, base, inhuman, they are fighting the stars and the stars will be too much for them.

Evil doing sometimes wins a skirmish; now and then it may be victorious in a battle; but the long, hard war goes always against it. When the end comes and the armistice is signed, Sisera and all the forces of evil which he represents will be found biting the dust. Forces seen and unseen, forces human and divine, will finally beat down any man or any nation of men who undertake to fight the stars.

Here are two young men in college! One of them is living a real life. Good habits, hard work, the right sort of intimates, aspirations which reach clear up to the stars! The other man seeks out the shady places in the city life; he cultivates the refuse; he keeps his mind dulled and his body below par by certain habits of evil indulgence.

We know at a glance which one of the two men will be sitting twenty years from now in the directors' meeting or in some similar place of honor, and which one will be sitting out somewhere on a high stool or tramping the streets periodically in search of a job. He will wonder why his luck has been against him. No luck about it! It was all

worked out according to rules as definite as the statements of the multiplication table. The second man enlisted with that army of fools who, under the leadership of Sisera, went out to fight the stars. Naturally, they went down in defeat.

No man ever outwitted the stars and no man ever will. The sun rises when it is due, no matter how we set our clocks, "Eastern Standard Time," "Daylight-saving Time" or what not. And no man ever got ahead of the moral order, which is equally august and irresistible in its ongoings. Let him seek out all the devices he may, he will be compelled at last to settle by the books and to reap exactly what he has sown.

The stars in their courses never tarry long in bringing in their verdict upon the coarse sins of the flesh,—murder and licentiousness, drunkenness and gluttony,—but the operation of that same law of retribution reaches all the way down to the more subtle forms of evil doing,—pride and envy, hatred and malice, selfishness and greed, moral indifference and spiritual sloth. All these in their final outcome bring misery and ruin. The man who builds them into his life is fighting the stars.

How foolish men are in the face of all this to pit their puny strength against the divine will! When I was a boy in college I went one night to hear Robert G. Ingersoll lecture on "The Mistakes of Moses." He was a man of splendid presence—the God whom he sometimes blasphemed had given him a magnificent body. He had a wonderful voice, resonant, musical, sympathetic, almost persuasive. He had certain clever rhetorical tricks which were pleasing to those who are pleased with such things.

At one point in his lecture that night he paused and said: "They talk about the Omnipotent God who punishes evil. I will give the Omnipotent God three minutes to strike me dead here on this platform for the things I have just been saying about Him. I dare him to do it." He shook his fist at God.

Then he drew out his watch, and holding it up in a silence that was tense as the seconds were ticked off, the lecturer waited for God to strike him dead. Some of the people shivered and some held their breath, as if they feared that something terrible might happen. When the three minutes

were up, Mr. Ingersoll closed his watch, put it back in his pocket, turned to the audience with a bland smile and said, "There is nobody there! Nobody there!"

I shall never forget the comment made upon his performance by a wise and godly minister old enough at that time to have been my grandfather. "Did the little man think," he said, "that he could exhaust the patience of the Eternal God in three minutes?"

Mr. Ingersoll's books, with his lectures on "The Mistakes of Moses" and all the rest, are sold to-day chiefly in second-hand book-stores for a song. There is scarcely any demand for them. In the meantime, this Bible which he ridiculed, the Book which he thought he could destroy, sold last year over seven millions of copies; and it will continue to sell so long as men can read, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." It makes men wise unto salvation and furnishes them thoroughly for all good work.

How much it means where men fight with the stars, rather than against them! How valiant they

become when their purposes are such that they find themselves on "the side of the angels." In that sense of an open alliance with the Unseen, they feel the sure promise of victory.

Here about us are forces, unseen but mighty, holding all the suns and stars in the sky true to their courses and causing them to move along their respective orbits on schedule time! Here are forces, unseen but mighty, used to broadcast this voice of mine by wireless into half the states of the Union, enabling people in them all to hear and understand if they should choose to listen in! Here are other forces, unseen but mighty, moving the race up out of darkness into light! With all its groping and stumbling, humanity has never quite lost the trail. Yesterday it thought as a child; to-day it puts away childish things and becomes a man, knowing in part; to-morrow it will know still more. It is on its way toward that light in which there is no darkness at all. This movement from ignorance into intelligence is a movement, by the blessing of God, as resistless as the ongoing of the stars.

Here are other forces, unseen but mighty, en-

abling the race to make headway in righteousness! Certain forms of evil which once stood out naked and unashamed have been driven into rat-holes. Presently these rat-holes will be stopped up from the top and those forms of evil will be seen no more. The power of conscience grows and its domain widens. Men become morally sensitive touching forms of evil which once were taken as a matter of course.

The twentieth century saw the greatest disaster which has ever befallen the race, but it saw also the outpouring of sympathy and generous relief in a measure which was utterly without precedent. It saw also a stout protest against war as a method of settling international differences, which one hundred years ago would have been out of the question. War then was taken for granted. The power of conscience grows and its domain widens.

There is, "The power not ourselves which makes for righteousness," as Matthew Arnold said. "There is an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed," Herbert Spencer said—and his feeling was that it is friendly to righteousness. "The judgments of the Lord are true and

righteous altogether," the psalmist said, "and in keeping of them there is great reward." The stars are symbols of spiritual forces, august, cosmic, irresistible; and any man who is so faced that these forces fight on his side is faced toward victory.

Here is my watch! Tiny thing though it is, it keeps step with the stars! I could show you exactly where each one of these hands will be tomorrow morning when the sun comes up over the eastern horizon. This hour-hand goes around twice from sunrise to sunrise. It adjusts its gait to the movement of the planets. And if we are to live wisely and usefully, nobly and joyously, our wills and our affections must likewise be adjusted so that they too will keep step with the infinite purpose of God. His almighty forces of love and grace, of comfort and guidance, are all on our side if we will only have it so. They stand ready to fight for us and to bring us off of every field of moral struggle more than conquerors.

I was on the Mediterranean once, on my way from Italy to Egypt. Off the coast of Crete we

ran into a terrible storm. For a day and a night we were beaten and tossed. The breaking of our steering-gear made it necessary for the ship to lie to for several hours, while the waves dashed over the highest decks. In the absence of either sun or stars, we lost our reckoning.

But toward midnight the storm broke and the stars shone out through irregular patches of sky. Then the first officer went on deck with his instruments and he knew at once exactly where we were. We were sailing once more by the stars—the hours of uncertainty were over, and the next day we were casting anchor securely off the coast of Egypt. The tossing of the waves and the movement of the ship were uncertain, but the stars were sure. In like manner the well-being of any life, of any nation, of any social order, can only be assured by an effective coöperation with those august forces which are symbolized by the stars.

It all depends upon how men are faced. The Israelites that day on the Plain of Esdraelon had the storm at their backs. The wind and the sleet were fighting on their side. The Canaanites had the storm beating in their faces. The rain and

the mud, the wind and the sleet, spelled defeat for them. They were headed wrong. "All things work together for good" only to those who are faced right. All things, the hard things and the things which are easy, the bright days and the dark days—all things in their final outcome, in the net result they yield when the returns are all in, "work together for good to those who love God."

The stars in their courses fight for the men of honest purpose. When this ancient poet stood that night on the battle-field looking up at the sky, he had the sense of an adequate horizon. He looked out beyond the mud and the morass where the war-horses and the chariots of iron had gone down in defeat. He looked away beyond the slings and the arrows, the swords and the spears of the victorious Israelites. He saw forces of righteousness from above fighting against Sisera and against all the misguided, evil-hearted men who followed in his train.

When we look out toward that same sky we see one star of the first magnitude. It is the Star of Bethlehem. It is the Sun of Righteousness, which

has risen with healing in its wings. We hear the Captain of our salvation saying as he said of old, "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you"—power to overcome evil and power to do our work. In that sign, we go forth to conquer.

THE YOUNG WOMAN IN THE FAR
COUNTRY

III

THE YOUNG WOMAN IN THE FAR COUNTRY

WHEN Benjamin Franklin was our ambassador to France he was at a fashionable dinner one night in Paris, when the table-talk turned upon the merits of the short story. The people present all had literary taste, so that the topic was cleverly discussed. When the dinner was over, Franklin drew a small volume out of his pocket and said, "I have here a short story which I have greatly enjoyed." Then he read it to them aloud.

They were all entranced. The beauty of its style, the charm of the leading character, and the skill displayed in the development of the main theme, all made potent appeal. "Where did you get it?" they exclaimed. "Who wrote it?"

Franklin gravely told them that it was the story of Ruth and that it was found in the Bible. The

gay Parisians of that day were not famous for their familiarity with the Scriptures, and he had brought them something entirely fresh and unworn.

Here was a young woman leaving home! She was parting from her kindred and from all the associations of her girlhood to go into a far country. Her people were Moabites and she had grown up there in the land of Moab. Now she was setting out to live among the Hebrews in the land of promise.

Her name was Ruth, and she bore herself in such a way as to make that name sound sweet the world over. The secret of it was that she had come under the influence of an older woman, who represented a higher type of personal character than anything that Ruth had ever seen before. The grace of the older woman's manner, the kindliness of her heart, the quality of her religious faith, so far in advance of the coarser ideas and practices of Moab, all made their appeal to the heart of the girl. "In a word, Naomi was a lady, the first lady Ruth had ever seen." And the soul of the girl made instant and lasting response to the soul of a true woman.

Naomi means "pleasant," and this pleasant woman knew from her wider experience the joys and the sorrows, the privileges and the perils which belong to womanhood. She threw the mantle of her gracious influence around the girl. And the younger woman wished to have her life knit up with the life of this fine friend. "Entreat me not to leave thee," she said, "nor to leave off from following after thee. Where thou goest, I will go! Where thou lodgest, I will lodge! Thy people shall be my people and thy God, my God."

The religion of Moab was stained with cruelty and lust. Its unclean rites were loathsome to the better instincts of this young girl. She rejoiced to find, in the creed of Naomi, a God who bade men honor their mothers as well as their fathers. Her heart answered to those principles of purity, and to that finer chivalry which draws its strong right arm of protection around the weak. When the option was offered, Ruth made instant choice—"the far country" had the best of it that day. She called out, "Where thou goest, I will go. Thy people shall be my people and thy God, my God."

When the two women reached that far country, where Ruth was a stranger, the older woman guarded her in the associations she formed. She shielded the girl's good name in the social habits she adopted. She introduced her in those quarters where it was desirable for her to have friends. All the details of her thoughtful, kindly action are beautifully brought out in this lovely story of feminine friendship.

This kindly, unselfish interest was maintained until Naomi saw the younger woman married to a good man, established in her own home and the happy mother of a child—a child that grew up to be the grandfather of David, the greatest king that Israel ever had. The young woman gradually rose to the full dignity and privilege of her womanhood, largely through the personal friendship of this older woman whose name and nature were “pleasant.”

The telling of the love story which led to this happy issue shows a deft hand. The two women were poor, and it was necessary for Ruth to go into the fields to glean after the reapers. The law of Israel made merciful and delicate provi-

sion for the relief of the needy in rural sections. "When thou cuttest thy harvest and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it—it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless and for the widow." The needy were thus encouraged to put forth a certain effort on their own behalf in the gaining of their bread.

When Ruth set out to glean, she went straight (perhaps by the wise prompting of the older woman) to the fields of a prosperous farmer named Boaz. His generous heart is indicated casually by a snap-shot taken of him when he met the men in his employ as they entered upon their day's work. "Boaz said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you.' And they answered him 'The Lord bless thee.' " The lines were falling in pleasant places for this young woman who was sent to glean.

When Boaz saw the comely Moabitess at her work, he said to his men "Whose damsel is this?" There was something arresting and interesting in the girl's appearance as the eyes of this well-to-do bachelor fell upon her.

When he was informed of the romantic attach-

ment she had shown for Naomi and how she had come from a far country to make her home in Palestine, his heart was touched. He gave her cordial permission to glean in his fields, and told her to join his men at meal-time and have her lunch with them. The girl was ready with her courtesy in the gracious acknowledgment she made of his kindness. "Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord! Thou hast comforted me and hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid."

Then Boaz was ready to take another step in this advancing and promising friendship. He said to his men, "Let her glean among the sheaves and let fall some handfuls on purpose for her and leave them that she may glean them." He would not allow this good-looking young woman who had smiled on him to go away empty-handed.

The young men who were doing the reaping were also accessible to feminine charm, and they let fall so many such generous "handfuls on purpose" that when Ruth at the end of the day "beat out what she had gleaned, it was about an ephah of barley."

She had done well; and when she brought the

result of her day's work to Naomi, the older woman was overjoyed at her success. "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?"

When Ruth told her that she had been in the fields of Boaz, Naomi's own wealthy kinsman, and when she described her fortunate meeting with the owner of the fields, it seemed to Naomi that the wind was in the right quarter and all signs favorable for fine weather. The Lord's hand was surely in it for good. She promptly said, "It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens and that they meet thee not in any other field." Ruth had struck a good lead, and Naomi would have her follow it up.

Every good woman, if she has been happily married herself, is a match-maker. She is never quite content until she is privileged to see all the unattached mated off and marching "two by two" into their happiness, as the animals went into the Ark. Naomi, therefore, arranged matters so that Ruth would meet Boaz in the evening, when conditions would be ripe for further love-making on his part should he be so moved.

He was "moved." He seems to have been rather

older than this fair young gleaner, and his heart was touched by her apparent preference for his society. "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followest not young men whether poor or rich." He was proud to feel that he was still an object of interest to fair young women.

From this point the action moves swiftly to its joyous climax. He was a brisk wooer, and Ruth was not insensible to the advantages of the offer he made. In almost less time than I am taking in telling the story, the young woman in this far country found herself betrothed to one of the best men to be found in that country. She need not glean any longer in the fields, for, by her fortunate marriage, the fields themselves and all that they yielded at the first cutting, were hers by right.

It was a happy marriage and her first baby was a boy. They named him Obed, who became the father of Jesse who was the father of the great King David.

Now the call for that same friendly interest of older women in younger women sounds out to-day in all our great cities. Ruth still comes in from the land of Moab and finds herself a stranger in a far country. She comes down to Boston from the Maine woods or from the hills of Vermont. She comes to New York from the small towns and country-places "up-state," and from the villages of New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. She comes into Chicago from the quiet places in all the great States of the Mississippi Valley. Ruth is here, hundreds and thousands of her, in all the fresh, sweet promise of her girlhood, facing the opportunities and the menace which await young girlhood in every great city! How will she fare in this far country? It all depends upon what she does with herself, but it depends also in great measure upon what others do on her behalf.

The attractive girl employed in a huge department store or in a large office or in a factory may easily find there some man, possibly the one from whom she must take orders, ready to take advantage of her inexperience. He will encroach little

by little, (never quite enough at any one time to bring an open protest) upon her maidenly reserve. He will offer her entertainment at the restaurants, at places of amusement, and in joy rides in his own car, until the way is often paved for what may be a tragedy in that girl's life.

Her own mother is miles away. There is no one at hand to speak effectively the word of caution. The moral atmosphere of the city is often relaxing, and before she recognizes the gravity of the situation, it is too late. These somber chapters of human history are being written out to-night, while men and women are sitting in the comfort and peace of their own homes, in all the cities where comely young women have gone out into the far country seeking employment.

Ruth lives oftentimes in a boarding-house. Even where the boarding-house is respectable, wholesome, and sanitary, it is always a poor makeshift of a place for healthy girlhood to unfold into joyous womanhood. There may or may not be a parlor for the entertainment of her callers. If there is, the other boarders collecting there often

make it about as attractive as Adullam's Cave or the base of Bunker Hill Monument. When the choice lies between a hall bedroom on the third floor back, heated perhaps by a gas-stove which burns the oxygen out of the air and the roses out of the girl's cheeks, and roaming the streets, or frequenting cheap, unworthy places of amusement, the choice may readily fall on the wrong side.

In the summer-time one will see Ruth sitting in the secluded places in the public parks, on the steps of churches or school buildings, entertaining her sweetheart there in the dark. The more fortunate members of society need not look upon such girls with any supercilious contempt. The chances are that nine tenths of these young women began as modest, pure-hearted maidens, reluctant to accept such methods of entertaining their friends. But in the boarding-house and in the crowded tenements, suitable social opportunities were lacking, and the unworthy makeshift was accepted. It is a condition and not a theory which confronts us—and the condition offers its menace to Ruth's modesty and to her honor when she is in a far country.

Young women who are strong and fine are able:

to resist all these temptations successfully. The honor of the American young women who work for their living is greatly to our credit as a nation. But young women are not all strong and fine—and even where they are, temptations may multiply and persist until they reach the danger-point.

As Victor Hugo said of *Fantine*, in “*Les Misérables*,” “Alas, if the jungfrau had been hungry, she might not have been so snowy white!” He had in mind not merely the hunger for bread, but the hunger for pretty things to wear, for articles of ornament, for flowers and bonbons and entertainment, to bring joy and zest into a life of toil. Every healthy girl feels that craving, and when the right means of satisfying it are not within her reach, the wrong means may claim her for their prey. Having sold her long, hard, monotonous days to toil, she may be led to sell her nights to shame.

Ruth is here in every big city, clicking the keys of her typewriter, making entries in the big books, standing behind the counters of the department stores, working in the factories! She is here, and, away yonder in the land of Moab from which she

came, her father and her mother, who sent her out pure and true, are looking to those older women, whose names are Pleasant, and to such splendid institutions as the Young Women's Christian Association, which organizes and institutionalizes the spirit of Naomi, to safeguard the higher interests of her unfolding nature.

The Father in Heaven from whom the whole human family is named, intended womanhood to be the fairest object which should come from His creative hand. He calls upon Christian society to throw around the young girl in more abundant measure those aids which shall protect and minister to her highest development.

Let Naomi form personal friendships with all the Ruths within her reach! Let her now and then invite Ruth to her home! Let her, like her namesake of old, put Ruth in the way of forming desirable associations! Let her give Ruth the chance to feel the personal contagion of her own finer and more mature personality!

Why should not every Christian woman, secure in the advantages of her own home, share in this

gracious effort? When Sunday comes or when holidays come, the dinner would taste ten times as sweet if some of these young girls away from home were there to share it with Naomi. Like the quality of mercy, hospitality is twice blessed—it blesses those who give and those who take. There are Christian families in all our cities who are becoming narrow and selfish for just that lack of widening their sympathies through the grace of hospitality. They need to let out a tuck here and there in their social interest, in order to take in those who would richly enjoy the hospitality of a real home.

May the blessing of heaven rest upon the work of the Young Women's Christian Association! Here is the splendid spirit of Naomi lodged in boards and bricks, in attractive furnishings and in social facilities, in gymnasiums and swimming-pools, in evening classes of all kinds for the better training of a girl's hands and head and heart, in gracious, tactful secretaries ready to give themselves without reserve in kindly friendship to all the girls who come!

How much all this may be made to mean for the

health and happiness, for the intellectual and spiritual development of the homeless young women in the far country of city life, shut out as they are for certain years—perhaps for all their years—from the comfort and culture of their own homes! How divinely acceptable all this service must be to Him who said, “I was a stranger and ye took me in. Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it unto me!”

How finely the spirit of Naomi is embodied in the work of the Travelers’ Aid secretary! She is there in the great railway-stations and on the wharves, meeting the incoming trains and ships. Here are girls, any number of them, coming to us from other lands besides Moab! They reach our cities oftentimes unable to speak English. By their very helplessness in this far country they may readily fall into evil hands.

How much it means to have there a pleasant-faced, pleasant-voiced woman wearing a badge which is at once an introduction and a credential, ready without cost to offer her friendly service and wise guidance! Here are girls arriving in all our large cities, worthy of becoming the mothers

of kings as great as David ever was, whose lives are menaced by the moral wolves that lie in wait!

Society has no vaster or more vital interest than the care and culture of its womanhood. I like that fine word of the late William DeWitt Hyde of Bowdoin College! "It is the high office of womanhood to make our toil tolerable, our leisure enjoyable, our homes habitable, and our life in general livable."

It is no light task. With the hurry and strain of modern life, with the mounting up of cares innumerable and the increase of worry, with the steady temptation upon men and women alike to become sordid and material, it will require all the finest powers of our women, body, brain, and heart at their best, to keep alive and growing that measure of moral idealism upon which we must rely for our future progress.

It was Robert Browning, the greatest poet of the nineteenth century, who turned to the gifted and affectionate companion of his own life and said, "In thy face I have seen the Eternal." It is for every man coming up out of the heat and dust of

daily life to say as much as that to some woman, mother or sister, sweetheart or wife.

The word of purest aspiration had best become flesh and dwell beside him full of grace and truth. He must see in the face of some good woman all the lovely symbols of that life which is life indeed. And if the young women of our land are not to fail in their high office, they too in turn must stand habitually before Him with open face, reflecting, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord until they are changed into the same image.

The range of a woman's interest in our day has been greatly extended. "Woman's sphere" is now the whole round globe. She lives in a larger world and she thinks in larger terms. The women's clubs, for example, are sometimes merely places where numbers of women go to drink tea and show each other what nice clothes they have. But they are also places where thoughtful and aspiring women go to speak and to hear, to think and to plan in a broad way, touching matters more vital to the well-being of society than tea and clothes.

In these times every woman is a responsible citizen of the Republic in the highest, fullest sense of that term. In saying that, I am not suggesting in the remotest way that she needs to surrender one jot or one tittle of her purely feminine charm. God forbid! May the Lord deliver us from the manly woman or the ladylike man! It is a sad day when any girl undertakes to obscure the fact of her sex by wearing a man's clothes or by indulging in coarse talk or by smoking cigarettes. We have a sufficient number of men of that type already, without adding any feeble feminine imitations. The woman becomes supremely herself, she becomes supremely human, only as she becomes in the largest and best sense altogether womanly.

Here in the words of an ancient singer are suggested three of the finest qualities to be found in noble womanhood. The psalmist prayed "that our daughters might be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace." Character, culture, sympathy!

In personal character, sound and strong, reliable

and enduring as "cornerstones," the sure support of all that is best in personal and social well-being!

And cultured—smooth, fair, fine, and beautiful, even as the glory of a granite block is best brought out when it is "polished!"

And sympathy,—each one taking her place in the wall, her color in the pattern, her particular function in the corporate life! By the quality of sympathy, each life may be organized with other lives in the home, in the social group, in the club or in the church, until we have another well-knit section of that social fabric which is like "the wall of a palace" for the housing of all that is noblest in human life!

May the daughters of America, in the steady and determining contribution which they are making to our total life, be as "cornerstones polished after the similitude of a palace."

Here, then, is my short story of a young woman in a far country! How unlike the young man in the far country she was! She did not waste her substance in riotous living. She did not fling away the best that life holds for a doubtful mess of evil

indulgence. She did not spend with both hands until she found herself in want. She said in word and in deed to the best that she had ever seen, "Entreat me not to leave thee! Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy ways shall be my ways, and thy God, my God."

And this little book of Ruth, standing here in Holy Writ, tells us, once for all, that history is not all made in kings' courts or on battle-fields where brave men shed their blood. In those quiet corners of human experience where the hearts of women are touched to finer issues, forces are set in motion which bring nearer the day of the Lord.

THE KING WITH THE GREEN EYES

IV

THE KING WITH THE GREEN EYES

THERE came a day in the history of Israel when the people cast aside the simpler and more democratic methods which had marked their early development as a nation. The plan of "government of the people, by the people and for the people," with only the spirit of the Lord in their hearts as the court of last appeal, no longer sufficed. They cried out, "Give us a king, that we may be like all the nations!"

They too had been bitten by the bug of royal pretense. They were already under the shadow of an imperialistic ambition. They wanted to set up a throne and have their crowned heads and all the pomp and circumstance which go with the idea of "the divine right of kings."

The first king on whom they poured the anointing oil was a young man named Saul. He showed many a fine quality in his early life. He was "a

choice young man," the record says, "and goodly." He was tall and handsome—he stood head and shoulders higher than any man of his time. He looked the part—he looked "every inch a king," if kings can be measured by inches. He would have high decorative value for state occasions, even though he might be lacking in certain qualities of mind and heart. It was a military type of hero which the people had in mind, and Saul looked fit to lead their armies and to fight the battles of the nation.

When he first comes upon the scene, he is a farmer's boy, strong, clean, joyous-hearted, as he strides across the hills in search of his father's asses which had strayed away from their own pasture. He talks familiarly with his servant and calls out gaily to a group of girls whom he meets on the road. Then he comes face to face with the aged prophet, who looks deep down into the clear eyes of hopeful, courageous youth and instantly causes the boy's heart to leap within him by telling him that he is destined to be a king. He is to sit upon the throne and rule over the twelve tribes of Israel.

How nobly the young king bore himself upon occasion in those earlier years! His people at one time had suffered from the attacks of certain cruel, lustful tribes which dwelt upon their border. When the situation had become intolerable, Saul led forth his army in three brigades and by a forced march at night and a swift, sharp attack, he destroyed them all. It was a victory terrible and final.

But in that land, as in all lands, there were sore-heads, detractors, and copperheads. They immediately began to cast aspersions upon the honorable success which he had achieved. They said, "Shall this Saul reign over us?"

Then there came a cry from the victorious army, "Bring those men and let us put them to death." But Saul refrained—"There shall not a man be put to death this day, for the Lord hath wrought deliverance in Israel." His magnanimity and his self-restraint shone out in that high hour, revealing the man at his best. Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city!

It was like the spirit of General Grant at Appomattox. When General Robert E. Lee came

forward to surrender his army, we are told that he offered Grant his sword. But Grant waved it aside with a gesture of courtesy. When some of Grant's soldiers began to fire salvos of artillery over the victory they had won, Grant at once sent out an orderly to stop it. "We are all citizens now of the same country," he said; "let us have peace."

When Lee referred to the fact that many of his troops had been on short rations for days, Grant gave orders instantly to his quartermaster that rations be issued to the Confederates—and soon the blue and the gray were being fed from the same generous store. When Lee spoke of the fact that many of his men in the artillery and the cavalry owned their own horses, Grant said, "They had better keep them—they will need them for the spring plowing." How right and good it was! Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that captureth an army!

But there came a day in the history of Saul when the milk of human kindness in his heart was curdled and soured by the spirit of jealousy. When Goliath, the leader of the hated Philistines,

had defied the armies of Israel, daring them to send out a man to fight him, Saul was afraid to go. He had no stomach for a bout with the big Philistine, even though he did stand head and shoulders above his fellows. It was left to David, the stripling, to win a notable victory over the giant from Gath.

When the soldiers returned from that successful campaign, "the women came out of the cities of Israel singing." How true to life it is! Women to this hour have a way of indicating that their gentle hearts are strangely stirred by the sight of marching men in khaki. When the Army and Navy are represented at a great ball, the poor civilian is all but ignored in the bestowal of feminine interest. The women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

This was not melody and harmony to the ears of the older hero—it was a crash of discord. "This saying displeased him and Saul was very wroth." He was not big enough to rejoice in the personal prowess of a younger man. He was not broad enough to rejoice that this younger man by his own courage had brought deliverance to the

kingdom and had removed the reproach from the armies of Israel.

His eyes, his face, and his heart turned green with hateful jealousy. "What more can he have but the kingdom?" Saul said with a growl. "And from that day," the record says, "Saul eyed David." His look was a look of malice and his hand was against the man whom the people delighted to honor.

We need not to go back to ancient times nor to foreign lands to find the outcroppings of this same ugly spirit of military jealousy. There were officers in the Revolutionary Army who seemed to be thinking more about the amount of gilt braid on their uniforms than about the service they might render to the struggling colonies. The twenty years of wrangling between certain commanders in the War of 1812 and the disgraceful squabbles between officers in the Mexican War make sorry reading for a patriot. It only took two hours to fight the Battle of Santiago de Cuba in the Spanish War, but it took more than two years to settle the question as to which man should receive the more credit, Sampson or Schley. It

has not been settled yet to everybody's satisfaction. How ugly is the inability of one man to rejoice in the high qualities of another and in the service rendered to a common cause!

Here in a later chapter of this same short book of Samuel, we come upon another picture of the king which is as bleak as some wind-swept moor in winter. He was no longer the joyous-hearted farmer's boy. It is the same Saul, but now grown old and wretched and despairing. The affairs of his country were all awry; his own heart was torn to shreds by evil memories and disappointing ambitions; his best friends had fallen away, until he stood alone like Napoleon on the deck of the ship which was carrying him to St. Helena and to a lonely death. He creeps out at night to visit the Witch of Endor and to extract from her, if possible, some secret form of help. Here is the age-long, world-wide tragedy of a bright, promising, joyous boyhood turning gradually into a bitter, guilty, desperate old age!

What malign factor wrought this change and caused that early promise of usefulness to go down

in defeat? In the main, it was the spirit of jealousy. Saul had other faults, but his sorest lack lay in his inability to look generously upon the fine qualities in other men, his unwillingness to rejoice that other men might succeed where he had failed and thus advance the cause which they all had at heart.

“Beware, my Lord,” the great dramatist has one of his characters say in the play of *Othello*, “beware, my Lord, of jealousy! It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on.” The king became a man with green eyes—and that spelled ruin.

Then follows the long, gruesome story of Saul’s repeated attempts to kill his rival in the affections of the people. When the king had found himself melancholy and depressed, when “an evil spirit was upon him,” as the record says, he had been accustomed, in those earlier years, to send for David to play for him upon his harp. He had in those happier days found relief and restoration in music.

But on one occasion, when the young man’s

eyes were upon his harp, Saul took his spear in his hand and sought to kill him where he sat. The young man was quick of eye and fleet of foot, as he had shown in his encounters with the wolves and the bears when he kept his father's sheep, and thus he escaped out of the house.

When David had prevailed over Goliath the Philistine, Saul gave him, according to the promise made in the presence of the army, his own daughter as a wife. Then in a fit of jealous hatred he sent some of his men to David's house to kill him before the eyes of his wife. But the young woman was loyal to her husband—she turned against her father's wicked purpose and saved David's life by letting him down from the window with a cord. She then placed a life-sized image, "the Tera-phim," it is called, in his bed. By putting a pillow of goat's hair under its head and covering it with clothes, she made it look like the figure of a man in bed. She told Saul's men that David was ill, and pointed to the bed to confirm her statement.

The rough hearts of those evil men were touched with pity by the look of concern on the face of the young wife and by the sight of the figure in bed.

They went back and reported to Saul that David was ill.

Then the jealous king called out, "Bring him up to me in his bed that I may slay him." He would have the satisfaction of killing his rival with his own hand. But when the messengers returned to David's house, they found nothing but the image in the bed—David himself was already miles away.

There came a time in this story of relentless persecution when we look upon one of the great night scenes of the Bible. Saul and his army were encamped in the wilderness of Ziph. It is a lonely, forlorn region and the wild beasts were howling in the distance. David himself had been hunted through that wilderness as though he had been a wild beast or a wicked fugitive from justice.

He and his trusted friend came upon the camp of the king in the dark, and, because it was an out-of-the-way place, all the soldiers were asleep. The two young men crept along in quiet until they saw the king himself asleep within the barricade of wagons with his spear stuck in the ground at

his head, like the sign of the headquarters of the Sheik among the Arabs to this day.

Here at his feet David saw his enemy utterly within his power! His companion, knowing the long, dark story of hateful persecution, whispered to him that the time was ripe for action. "Let me smite him with the spear at one stroke—I will not strike the second time." One swift, sharp thrust of his spear would suffice to pay off the score.

David lived at a time when "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life," was the law of the land—it was believed to be the law of God. The air he breathed was not the atmosphere of forbearance. The popular heroes were men like Gideon and Samson, women like Deborah and Jael, who did not hesitate to strike down their enemies whenever opportunity offered.

David belonged to that race whose *Shylock* would say, "If I can catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him."

But David belonged also to that race whose great prophet would say, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." He belonged to

that race which gave us the Messiah, coming with songs of peace and good will in the air and with these benign words upon his lips: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

David stood there in the dark, his enemy at his feet, quietly putting aside all thought of revenge. "Destroy him not," he whispered to his companion. "God forbid that I should put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." He respected the office of the king, if not the man who bore it. The two young men passed on their way under cover of the night, leaving Saul asleep and unhurt.

How fine it was!

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd.

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest.

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

'T is mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes

The thronèd monarch better than his crown:

We do pray for mercy;

And that same prayer doth teach us all to render

The deeds of mercy."

When we look upon the two of them there together, Saul and David, one of them filled to the

eyes with the spirit of jealousy and hatred, the other, with all his faults, a man of mercy and forgiveness, we know at a glance that when the Master of all the higher values, the Lord of mercy and the Saviour of mankind shall come, He will come not from the house and lineage of Saul, the first king of Israel, but from "the house and lineage of David," the greatest king that Israel ever knew.

The ugliness of personal jealousy may not always find expression in actually destroying the object of its dislike, but persisted in, it kills the finer life in the heart which cherishes it. It is a malignant germ. It leads inevitably to blood-poisoning. Unless its ravages are checked, it will issue in death. "I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment." The Master would forbid not only the outward act of murder, he would also forbid the cherishing of that spirit of ill will which, like the seed of some noxious growth, may develop a tragic harvest.

We may think in these days that with our Christian ideals and our more humane mode of life, we

have moved entirely away from the rude moral standards of those Old Testament times. In great sections of our ordinary practice this might be true. Yet how sadly men need this warning against the tragic end of that narrow, bitter, jealous spirit which will not be fair to an opponent!

We have recently emerged from another great political campaign—a President was to be elected, and thirty-two United States senators and thirty-four governors of states and many other important officials. How easy it was for newspapers and for speakers to make their appeal to class feeling, to race prejudice, and to religious bigotry! How deplorably easy it was for one side to seek to build itself up by unfairness to the other side! In these strange, hard days which have followed upon the Great War, when it is of the first importance that men should be learning to love one another, it is frightful that thousands of tongues and of pens are busy teaching men to hate one another.

Here we are knit up together in a great economic system! The prizes are enormous; the problems are vast and intricate; the occasions for friction and irritation are endless; the demands of a higher

standard of living, upon which we have all set our hearts, are exacting. It would be difficult to say which class of people thinks most of material things, those who have all the good things of life, or those who have n't them but want them more than they want anything else on earth—and stand ready to do anything within reason or without to get those good things for themselves.

If we make our approach to this huge industrial order (upon which we must all depend for food, clothing, shelter and all the rest) in that spirit of narrowness which looks solely upon its own things and not upon the things of others, in the spirit of selfishness and greed, every man for himself and the Devil take the hindmost, in the spirit of ill-will and jealousy, every one impugning the motives of his fellows and thinking meanly of them—if we make our approach in that mood, we have no reason to expect anything but increased distress, despair, and ultimate ruin. It is only in the spirit of friendliness and coöperation that we can advance together toward that larger and more evenly spread prosperity in which all industrious, honest-hearted men and women may share.

Here we are in a world of professional strife and competition! It is not easy for lawyers and doctors, for engineers and journalists, for teachers and for preachers to show the spirit of fairness toward their competitors for the attention and interest of society. It is not easy for them to rejoice that good work is being done in those various lines whether the honor of it belongs to them or to those who somehow seem to have passed them on the road. I am not sure that there is anything morally finer in all the lovely outbursts of generosity which history records, than the spirit of perfect fairness to an opponent or a competitor in one's own line of life. It was the greatest of the apostles who said to those Greeks, "Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, think on these things!" Build them into your life, "and the God of peace shall be with you."

Here we are in the midst of a period of theological strife! How easy it is to pour contempt upon the opinions of those with whom we disagree! How easy it is to stigmatize as "stupid and reactionary" those who sincerely hold fast to the more

conservative point of view! How easy it is to brand as "unbelieving infidels" those who have learned to live by a more liberal interpretation of the great spiritual verities!

But that whole mood of theological partisanship is fatal to the spirit of the gospel. Let the impatient disputants grow quiet and listen until they hear One say, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd."

Men have sometimes marveled at the words of commendation pronounced upon John the Baptist by Jesus Christ. Their methods were so unlike. John was harsh and rigid—his ax was laid at the root of the tree and his fan was in his hand, as he set forth to burn up the chaff of human society with unquenchable fire. He called the evil-doers of his day "a generation of vipers" and warned them to "flee from the wrath to come."

Jesus showed habitually a tender concern for the bruised reed and the smoking flax which has never been surpassed. When He looked upon the

thoughtless multitudes He was moved with compassion for them as for sheep without a shepherd. He did not denounce his enemies, He prayed for them.

“John came neither eating nor drinking” in normal fashion. He lived in the desert “on locusts and wild honey” with a strip of camel’s hide about his loins. “The Son of Man came eating and drinking,” living an intensely social life; and he wore a seamless robe on which the Roman soldiers at his crucifixion set high value. Jesus and John stood poles apart in their methods. Yet when John was beheaded Jesus said, to His disciples, “Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.”

I wonder if we may not find a certain clue to the secret of that high estimate in John’s attitude toward the One who was to supplant him in the religious leadership of that period. He had been the outstanding figure in the spiritual life of Israel in his day. Now another was to take and hold the center of the stage for all time.

John saw it all with clear eyes. When Jesus came to him at the beginning of his own ministry

to be baptized, John drew back,—“I have need to be baptized of thee.” He did not feel himself good enough to baptize the younger man, though he would gladly have accepted baptism at his hands. He said a moment later, “I indeed baptize with water”—it was all he could do—“One cometh after me, mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, He shall baptize with the holy spirit.”

And when he contrasted his method with that of the Master, he saw clearly his own limitations. He rejoiced that something higher had come to replace his imperfect leadership. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” It takes a royal soul to look with gladness upon the success of another in his own particular line and say from the bottom of his heart, “Let me be effaced, if need be, provided only the great task be accomplished! Let him increase, while I decrease!”

THE THREE MIGHTY MEN

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THE THREE MIGHTY MEN

THE greatest king that Israel ever had was, in his youth, an outdoor man. He lived close to the soil, close to the sheep, close to the things that breathe and grow. How much of rugged strength, of homely common sense, of firm grasp on things vital has been developed in the healthy youth which is country-bred! How many men in Boston's Blue Book of commercial and professional success came from Cape Cod or from down in Maine, from the Berkshire Hills, from the Granite state, or from the Green Mountains of Vermont!

David won his first instalment of public recognition in that duel with the giant Philistine from Gath. It seemed a contest most unequal. Goliath was a huge fellow, nearly ten feet in height, the record says. His armor weighed one hundred and fifty pounds. "His spear was like a weaver's

beam." He stood forth in his mighty wrath defying the armies of Israel, daring them to send forth a man to face him in single combat.

His opponent was only a stripling. He came forward as a shepherd boy with sling and stone, even as he had repelled the attacks of the lions and the bears from his father's flock. His clean outdoor life had kept his nerves steady, so that he was able to sling stones at a hair's-breadth and not miss. His faith in the living God and his moral passion, as he came forth to lift the reproach from the banner of his nation, gave strength to his arm.

In the last analysis "the battle is the Lord's," who saveth not alone with spear and sword. The final forces in human society are always the spiritual forces—they at last decide the issue. There are sentiments and principles deeply wrought into the nation's life which are mightier than the heaviest battalions. There are devotions and enthusiasms which will outwear and outlast the largest collection of munitions and equipment. There are persistent habits of thought and tenaciously cherished ideals which constitute a more reliable

defense of the citadels of the nation's welfare than all the ramparts and battlements ever devised by the strategy of men. Let the whole earth know that there is a God in Israel and in Europe and in every land the sun shines on!

When moral forces were pitted against brute strength on that great day in David's life, the finer form of valor had the best of it. When the scornful self-confidence of Goliath dressed in his coat of brass was opposed by the spirit of faith, the arm of flesh went down in defeat. The contrast in method was voiced in David's challenge to the advancing foe. "Thou comest to me with spear and sword! I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts whom thou hast defied."

The eyes of insight, piercing through the outward appearance and recognizing those unseen energies which are mighty through God to the casting down of the strongholds of evil, saw victory resting already upon that strength which is from above.

The young man rose rapidly to eminence from that same hour until he was crowned to be king, and he wore that crown as no other king of Israel

has ever worn it before or since. "The house and lineage of David" became a phrase to conjure with in all the centuries of Israel's unfolding history.

But the man of achievement fell away from those finer standards of conduct which had ruled his earlier years. He sinned most grievously against God and man. His hands were stained with innocent blood, for he had been guilty of murder and adultery. He had a load upon his heart which even the divine mercy did not remove.

It may well be doubted as to whether his fingers penned those burning words in the penitential psalm, but the experience they portray was his beyond peradventure. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness! I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me. Against thee have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart and renew within me a right spirit. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

There came an hour when at the close of a long, hard, hot day David was thirsty and he found him-

self longing for a drink of water from the old well on his father's farm. "Oh for a drink of water from the well that is in Bethlehem by the gate." He had played around that well as a boy. He had drunk from its cool depths on many a sultry afternoon. Now in his maturity he longs for a drink of water which would taste as that water tasted when he was a boy.

We know the feeling full well. We may have wished this morning that the coffee would taste again as it did when Mother made it. We may have wished that Christmas and the circus and things generally would bring once more the old thrills of delight.

Now as a matter of fact, the water and the coffee, Christmas and the circus, have not changed, except for the better. But we have changed, even as the heart of David had been changed by bitter experience. The fresh, unjaded zest for life has gone. The keen relish for the simpler and more wholesome forms of experience is no longer what it was. Our sensibilities have been blunted, until a drink of water from the well no longer tastes like the nectar of the gods.

The painful longings of this aged king went deeper than the contents of a well. The water was only an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual satisfaction which he craved. He longed for the innocence and the radiant serenity of his unstained youth.

He wished that he might find himself again a shepherd boy keeping watch over his father's flocks and singing on the hillsides of Judea, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." He wished that he could feel again the joy of striking down that giant Philistine with sling and stone and hear again the shouting of the soldiers of Israel. He wished that he might see himself coming up again from those high hours to be anointed the king of his country. In those great days his life was sound and clean—it sang as the birds sing in the trees.

He found himself a homesick old man. He wished that he might turn back the files of time and live over again those earlier years, avoiding the folly and evil which had brought him pain. Half aloud and half to himself on that hot night

he muttered, "Oh for a drink of water from the well in Bethlehem by the gate."

Three of his soldiers, "mighty men of valor," they are called, heard this cry from the lips of the king, and they wrote out in terms of action one of the finest short stories in all the Bible. They did a brave deed because they loved their king.

They stole out that night through No Man's Land into the enemy's lines. They were taking their lives in their hands, for the ruthless Philistines would have killed them on the spot had they been discovered. They went straight on through the enemy's country under cover of darkness until they reached the old well in Bethlehem by the gate. They drew out of it a jug of water and brought it back by the same perilous route until they delivered it into the hands of the king. They had ventured everything on the strength of a bit of sentiment which they cherished toward the ruler of their country.

It was not a very sensible thing to do when we

come to think of it. They might have been killed—and the lives of three brave men are worth more than a jug of water from any well on earth. “It showed a lack of common sense,” I hear some practical man saying to himself. He thinks that those three mighty men did not rightly sense the situation as “a hard-headed business man” would have done. They were all astray in their scale of values.

But man does not live by common sense alone. When he tries to do it, he dies in certain important areas of his nature. Considerations of prudence may point to a certain conclusion as solid and verifiable as the multiplication table—and as powerless to move the heart to higher levels of feeling and purpose. The finger of expediency may indicate a certain line of action as clear and plain as the Milky Way—and as coldly remote from human well-being.

We are hearts as well as heads—we are hearts even more than we are heads. “Out of the heart are the issues of life.” “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” The man who roots out all sentiment from his nature to make more

room for the chilly dictates of expediency will be sorely disappointed when the harvest comes.

When the Messiah was born, not far from that well in Bethlehem by the gate, wise men came from the East to do Him honor. When they found Him with Mary his mother, "they opened their treasures and presented Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh."

They showed their good sense in bringing gold—it could be used to purchase comforts for a family so poor that they were compelled to sleep in a stable. But how about the "frankincense and myrrh"—they seemed to have no practical value in such an hour. They were simply the offerings of sentiment and moral imagination. They belonged to the poetry of human existence, rather than to the prose comfort of every-day life.

Yet all that has large place in the Christian scheme of things. It ranks with Mary's alabaster box of choice perfume used to anoint the head of Christ and filling a whole house (and eventually the whole world) with its fragrance. The commercial instincts of a practical man (who did not

turn out very well, it ought to be remembered) were offended on that occasion. "It might have been sold," he said, "for so much,"—and he named the price. He knew the market quotations of expensive perfumery.

Yes, it might have been sold and the money given to the poor. But neither the rich nor the poor live by cash alone. They live by all the great words which proceed out of the mind of God,—faith, hope, love, sentiment, devotion, enthusiasm, aspiration, courage, high resolve,—as well as by food, clothing, and shelter. By all these men live.

The Master of all the higher values defended the woman's action—"She hath wrought a beautiful work on me." The beautiful work which is clothed with wholesome sentiment has large place in the development of personal character and in the achievement of social well-being.

The three mighty men who had moved out in the strong grip of a noble sentiment broke through the lines of the Philistines and brought David a drink of water from the old well. Mr. Money-

bags could not have hired them to do it. Their sentiment was not for sale. They would not have imperiled their lives that night for an added bit in the pay envelop.

The choicest things in life cannot be purchased with bank-notes—a woman's kiss of affection, the fine, uncalculating friendship which one man cherishes for another, the devoted self-sacrifice of a mother who gives her all for her child without ever asking "how much," the life-blood of a patriot poured out as a libation for his country! These great values in life are never bought and sold as if they were meat and potatoes. They are given away freely by the generous souls who have them to offer.

It is nothing less than a calamity where charity and relief work become so thoroughly scientific as to be coldly practical and utilitarian. The needy men and women are not just "cases" for a filing-cabinet. They are not mere backs and stomachs to be clothed and filled. They are "folks" like ourselves. They are minds and hearts. They have

sensibilities and aspirations which crave their meat from God—they crave a higher satisfaction at the hands of a kindly, intelligent interest.

“Faith without works is dead,” for religious impulse must utter itself in wholesome action. “But just as surely,” Herbert A. Youtz says, “works that are not prompted by faith of a certain depth, end in spiritual death. Service that is neither the expression of depth of soul in the one serving nor the awakening of depth of soul in the one served is the bitter gospel of materialism. The reality of the spirit is the central source and concern of human ministry.” Let every social worker have his eye out for “the menace of mechanism.” Without vision the people perish just as surely as they perish without food.

The social worker may have his doctor’s degree from some honored university. He may read his “Survey” as regularly as he washes his face. He may have at his tongue’s end all the latest lingo of scientific charity. The more of all this the better, if it has been brought under the power of a worthy consecration.

But if he has never sensed the fragrance of

Mary's alabaster box, he is still, with all his learning, grossly incompetent for his high task. The finer sentiments, which have their place in the lives of rich and poor alike, are more precious than all the sacks of flour and the generous orders of coal—they are more precious than diamonds and rubies.

In the days of our youth, some of us declaimed "The Charge of the Light Brigade" to patient audiences. "It is a brave description of a brave ride," as Myron Reed once said. The colonel of the fated regiment at Balaklava received his order, gathered up his bridle-rein, and swung himself into the saddle, saying, "Here goes the last of the Cardigans and thirteen thousand pounds a year."

When a healthy young man is the oldest son of a lord and is the heir to an income of sixty-five thousand dollars a year, he has a good deal to lose. When he lays it all down for the sake of a forlorn hope, simply because it all comes in the day's work as part of his military duty, he is a good deal of a soldier.

"It was magnificent," some wise old head once

remarked, "but it was not war." I am not so sure about that. If by some device of higher mathematics we could vault into that Fourth Dimension and reckon up all the moral courage, all the devotion to an ideal, and all the public spirit kindled into action by the example of those six hundred brave men, it might seem that they had made a royal investment of their lives.

"Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die,
Noble six hundred!"

On all the upper levels the world is ruled mainly by those sentiments which rise supreme above all lesser considerations.

But the last chapter of this short story about the three mighty men is yet to be read. When they brought the jug of water to the king, he would not drink it. Here it was, water from Bethlehem, clear and cold as it had been in the days when he saw the bucket come up dripping from the bottom of the well! Here were the three men who had brought it standing by, their faces flushed with

joy of their achievement and their hearts beating high with the love they bore him, to witness his satisfaction. "Drink it, man, drink it!"

But David would not touch a drop of it! It would have choked him. He poured out a cup of it. He held it up to his face as if he would enjoy its precious bouquet. He then held it up to the light. Drink it? Never!

It had become invested with a kind of divine sacredness in his eyes. It had become like the blood-red wine of the sacrament. It was too precious and holy to be used for any private, personal gratification, even though that gratification might be as innocent as the slaking of thirst with cold water.

"Far be it from me, O Lord! Is not this the life-blood of those men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" He carried it apart and poured it out in sacrificial fashion to the Lord.

Here again I hear some hard-headed business man uttering his protest! "Why did he not drink it, after the three mighty men had taken all that trouble to get it for him? What good would it do the Lord to pour it out before Him? He might

at least have given those men the satisfaction of seeing him drink it."

But alas, the hard-headed man has missed the meaning of the story, even as he sometimes misses the meaning of life itself! There are things innumerable which come to be clothed with values too precious to be used for any kind of physical gratification.

In such an hour the soul of the man rises supreme above the call of physical appetite. His capacity for worship craves its satisfaction in ways which the materialist knows not of. His sense of kinship with the Eternal makes him intent upon strengthening that bond which unites his soul with the soul of the Infinite.

When General Grant retired from the Presidency, he made his celebrated tour around the world. He was honored in all lands and was received by many of the crowned heads. When he reached Japan he went, naturally, to the city of Nikko, the city of shrines, and the burial-place of the two great Japanese heroes, Iyeyasu and

Iyemitsu. There at Nikko is the famous red lacquer bridge across the river, upon which no man has ever walked, save only the sacred person of the Emperor.

But as a mark of honor to his American guest and in gratitude for the friendship he had enjoyed, the Emperor gave direction that when General Grant visited Nikko the sacred bridge should be opened and that he should be allowed to walk across.

Then our great American soldier showed that he, too, had all the fine qualities of an uncrowned king. He expressed his deep sense of appreciation for the honor the Emperor had shown him, and declined to cross the bridge, so that the sacred tradition might be kept inviolate.

It was only a bit of sentiment on both sides; but nobly conceived and nobly expressed, it served to strengthen the bond of friendship between that land and ours—a friendship, may it please God, which must never be broken by careless tongues or wicked hands or useless acts of Congress passed by thoughtless men! Nations as well as

individuals are moved to those lines of action which write the noblest pages of their history by the sentiments which possess the heart.

How mighty would be the power of moral imagination could we exercise it upon many of the commodities of our daily life! Here is a young man holding in his hand his monthly allowance of spending-money! He is blind if he thinks that the value of that money can be stated in dollars and cents. Money has in it the potentialities of life or of death. It is an expression of life. Into the creation of that bit of value, toiling men and women have put the sweat of brow or of brain.

If the young man has eyes to see, he will say to himself. "Is not this the life-blood of those toilers who gave of their best that this value might be created? Far be it from me to use it carelessly, ungratefully, wickedly." He would feel that he was drinking in insolent fashion the heart's blood of those toilers if he used a dollar of it in unworthy indulgence.

Here is a woman who rustles into her parlor in all the elegance of her silk and lace! Would

God that all such luxury had been made possible by commercial and industrial methods which Jesus Christ would approve! In many cases it is not so. If that woman could see the tired faces and broken bodies of girls working for long hours in factories, in sweat-shops, or in huge department stores, where pay is sometimes kept down that profits may be kept up, she would hate the rustle of her finery. She would say, "Far be it from me, O Lord—is not this the worn-out tissues of those other lives that I am wearing for my own pleasure?" She could not rest until she was doing something to bring about better industrial methods and a more equitable distribution of the good things of life.

Here is a whole family, the children of good fortune, sitting at an open-grate fire in winter! If they could see in that glowing coal the burned-out vitality and stunted growth of underpaid miners who went in jeopardy of their lives that we might have coal brought to us from the bowels of the earth, if they could see the underpaid breaker-boys at the mouth of the pit, their hands torn and bleeding as they pick out the slate, and their lungs

blackened by the grime and dust, it would be impossible for them to sit there in open indifference to the lot of their less fortunate fellows. There would be developed in them a passion for social justice which would not rest until they had done something to change all that.

“How do they live who never see the sky
Save some grey patch by noon.
All smeared with dirty smoke?
Housed in foul tenements, reared in vile stench,
Broken by drudgery, hopeless through life,
How do they live?

How can they live who never turn their hands
To any useful work,
Yet know their ease is fed
By ceaseless toil and misery,
That other human beings die too soon,
That they may live in luxury?
How can they live?”

What keeps these honorable thousands of virile, red-blooded men in all our cities clean and straight? Considerations of prudence are weak as water when measured against the surging passions of healthy youth. The fear of physical contagion

or the dread of social disgrace are powerless to offset the temptation offered in every great city. What is the nature of those defenses against which in many a life all the devils of solicitation break their weapons without result?

The decent man is kept decent by the plain fact that he is too chivalrous to find pleasure in the degradation of any woman's life. The banishment of a girl from her father's house, or the wrecking of the whole life of a woman who ought to be a happy wife and mother in her own home, is too vile a prospect for his consideration. Find pleasure in that! He feels that it would be like drinking the life-blood of a fellow-mortal, and a woman at that, for one's physical gratification!

"Far be it from me, O Lord," he says to himself! "Not a dollar of my money nor an ounce of my strength shall go to the maintenance of a system of vice which, year after year, sends a multitude of misguided girls down a swift, sharp descent into physical and moral hell!"

Let that high sense of chivalry rather than the loathsome pictures of physical debauchery be held before the eyes of the boys as they grow up! Let

every mature man hold it before his own eyes! The great main safeguards of manly honor and of womanly purity are not to be found in statutes nor in policemen. They are not to be found in the fearful charts compiled by social reformers nor in the statistics of the eugenic societies. It may be that these have their place—I cannot believe that it is a place in the front rank. The moral safeguards are to be found mainly in the more thorough development of that fine spirit of chivalry which the Hebrew king showed three thousand years ago when he refused to slake his thirst on water which represents the life-blood of a fellow-being.

The very basis of all good breeding and of all sound morality is to be found in that instinctive and compelling respect which every right-minded man feels for the personality of another. No man is a gentleman and no man can be called good who lacks just that. The real man in every interest of life declines the option of purchasing his pleasure or his profit at the cost of the degradation of another human life.

Here, then, is my short story of the three mighty men! What were their names? How old were they? Were they rich or poor? No one knows. They belonged to that innumerable company of high-minded people who have caused their work to be remembered by the fine quality of it, even though the record of it bears no names.

It is a story of the heart. The homesick longing of an unhappy monarch for another taste of the innocent joys of his youth! The readiness of three brave men to hazard their lives in order to bring him what he craved, without money and without price, because they loved him! The fine unwillingness of that king to use for personal gratification that which they brought, as being now too costly and too sacred to be given to anyone save the Lord! Three bits of that finer sentiment, woven into the somber garb of the workaday world, which still has power to move the hearts of men to higher levels of feeling and of purpose.

THE PRINCE WITH THE BIG HEAD

VI

THE PRINCE WITH THE BIG HEAD

THE United States of Israel had also its "acts of secession." There came a day when the Ten Tribes in the north—the points of the compass were here reversed—seceded and set up a separate government. It was a sad day in Hebrew history, for the organic completeness of the nation was thus destroyed.

The number "twelve" was like a thought-form to a patriotic Hebrew. He could hardly conceive of the body politic save as having twelve members. His final vision of the perfect society in the New Jerusalem showed "twelve gates" bearing the names of the "twelve tribes" and the twelve foundation stones were marked with the names of the "twelve apostles."

When the kingdom was divided, it meant that "an ineffable sentiment made up of memory and hope, instinct and tradition" suffered grievous

shock. There was no longer that undivided national consciousness which had been a positive force in their political development. The ten northern tribes were now cut off from their past.

The two new nations of Israel and Judah were forced to graft the ragged ends of their political existence upon new and changed conditions. Rivalry and hatred took the place of united and corporate enthusiasm. "There were wars between Jeroboam and Rehoboam," the two kings of Israel and Judah, "continually." And the pathetic outcome of the unhappy separation is still preserved for us in that somber phrase, "The Ten Lost Tribes."

The situation when the division came was like this: the costly pride and wasteful extravagance of King Solomon had produced in the kingdom a widespread discontent. When his son Rehoboam succeeded to the throne it was a time for wise and careful statesmanship—this was "indicated," as the doctors say. Under such conditions any new administration had best feel its way, if haply it would find and restore to loyalty the disaffected

elements. There is such a thing as a useful attitude of concession, "a noble yielding that pacifieth great offences." It was nothing less than tragic when the young prince came to the throne that he was suffering from an aggravated case of what is popularly known as "the big head."

He began his life, unhappily, at the top of the tree. It is not the best sort of place to start. The solid, homely earth at the foot of the tree offers a much safer spot to begin. Then, if the young man makes his way up by his own wit and work and worth, he will know better what to do when he arrives. The path of ascent is difficult,—it is not so easy to climb in this exacting old world,—but the moral risk involved is much less than that connected with the line of descent, which stands forever open. It has been tried out so many times that one may rest assured that this principle is sound.

The young man's name was "Rehoboam," which is quite a mouthful. His father's name was "Solomon," commonly regarded as the wisest man of his day in the country he ruled. His father

was a king, and this young man, being the oldest son, was the heir to the throne. His father was a man of wealth—"he had men-servants and maid-servants until one could not count them," the record says. He had gold and silver in abundance—"all the drinking-vessels in the king's palace were of gold, and silver was counted as nothing." "He had a thousand chariots and twelve thousand horsemen," and all his possessions were on the same splendid scale.

Making full allowance for Oriental generosity and fervid imagination in describing the status of their heroes, we may be sure that Solomon enjoyed all the power and the privilege which came with fortune. All this magnificence had developed in his oldest son a certain arrogant contempt for the less fortunate members of society. Too much prosperity has its perils, especially for the immature.

When his father died and the young man came to the throne, he first took counsel with the old men of the realm. He felt that "days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom."

He would first hear the voice of experience.

The old men gave him a bit of good sound sense—they had not wintered and summered with this thing we call life for fifty or sixty years without learning something about it. They told the young man that conceit and arrogance would wreck any life. They told him that modesty and kindness were about the best assets that a young man could have. "If thou wilt serve this people and speak good words to them," the reaction will be all that heart could wish—they will turn around and "be thy servants forever."

Then the haughty young prince took counsel with the young men of his day. He asked the courtiers with whom he had grown up how they viewed life. They sang another sort of tune altogether. They said to him in effect, "Have a good time! Look out for Number One—if you don't, who will! Pile on all the traffic will bear! Keep your eye on the main chance, and do not allow those old fellows to put anything over on you!"

And this young chap did not have any more sense than to follow their lead—"he forsook the counsel of the old men," the record says, and

mounted his high horse. He would show them what was what. He went out and said to the people, "My father made your yoke heavy—I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips—I will chastise you with scorpions. My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins." And then he proceeded to do just that with both hands. He was "booted and spurred and ready to ride" rough-shod over the feelings of his subjects.

What a conceited young ass he was! He mistook bombast for strength, a pompous strut for a forceful personality. The two hot phrases as to his little finger being thicker than his father's loins and as to the methods he proposed being as much worse than his father's as scorpions were worse than whips, would stick in the minds of the people as trouble breeders. He surely needed another course in the Psychology of the Popular Mind.

His folly was shown in his disregard for the voice of experience. The advice of mature men becomes oftentimes a well of wisdom from the

very fact that the springs which feed it drain a wider region. "Old men for counsel, young men for war"—the proverb is threadbare. It is threadbare because it has done long and faithful service.

The gradual shaping of opinion under the tuition of experience is calculated to produce sound judgment. There is no other college equal to "the university of experience," where the college colors are "black and blue" because the lessons are learned mainly by hard knocks. The seniors in that great school have learned something worthy of careful consideration.

"He forsook the counsel of the old men and answered the people roughly." It is hardly necessary for me to relate what followed—any one would know. When any man, old or young, takes that attitude in political life, in business affairs, or in his social contacts, he is riding for a fall. He is headed for the ditch.

This young prince with "the big head" made a wretched failure of his whole life. He lost the sympathy of his best friends. He disrupted the kingdom which he had received from his father.

There came a revolt and then a revolution, and ten of the twelve tribes of Israel were permanently split off from the house and lineage of David. There was a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom, and the strife between Israel and Judah, the north and the south, clouded the sky. Selfishness, arrogance, contempt for the feelings of others, never have built a social order, a political order, or an economic order that would stand, and they never will. These moods come not to build, but to destroy.

The way of advance is another sort of way altogether. It is so in the sight of God. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased," while "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It was not the man who stood up and said, "Thank God, I am not as other men are," who went down to his house justified. It was the man who bowed his head and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

It is so in the eyes of the world—the grasping spirit never gets anywhere. It writes the sentence of defeat across its own forehead. It is the spirit of kindness and of self-forgetfulness that is

destined to inherit the earth. "Serve those people about you and speak good words to them," the voice of experience is saying to us, "and they will answer back with a response which will enrich and gladden your whole life." In any field one wishes to name this is the line of advance.

It was Woodrow Wilson who said to the young men of his generation, "Do you covet distinction? You will never get it by serving yourself. Do you covet honor? You will get it only as a servant of mankind."

"If thou wilt be a servant to these people, they will be thy servants forever." Here is the spirit of the eternal gospel! By the mutuality of service, subjects are bound to their rulers in unhesitating loyalty, disciples to their masters in undying affection, friends to friends by ties which never fail.

The king of kings took upon himself the form and the mood of a servant—and men have exalted His name above every other name. Before that quality of life developed by the habit of service, every knee shall finally bow, for that method is the Lord of Life.

There are three things which every healthy nature craves—first, self-realization. The young man may not put it in that high-sounding phrase. Unless he too is suffering from the big head, he will not. He had best not. He wants to live his own life and develop his own powers to the utmost. He wants to feel himself every inch and every ounce a man, well-rounded and measurably complete. One thing he desires of the world, that will he seek after, forgetting the things which are behind and reaching for the things which are ahead, he will press toward the mark of the high calling of God in fulness of life.

Now all this is just as it should be; but many a man enters upon that course in a self-centered mood. He is forever asking himself, touching his opportunities, "How much shall I get out of it? What is there in it for me? How will it affect my own personal development? What will this book or this friendship or this course of study or this chance of service do for me? What should I get out of the church or out of religion?"

These near-sighted individuals are continually feeling their own pulses, looking at their own

tongues, taking their own temperatures mentally and spiritually to ascertain how they are getting on. The only trial-balance they know anything about is the one they strike with themselves.

They are all headed in the wrong direction. That is not the way up—it is the way down. It will wreck any life. We were told a long time ago by One who knew what He was talking about, that the method of indirectness is the way of advance. “He that saveth his life shall lose it. He that loseth his life for my sake,” by investing it in kindly service, “shall find it and keep it eternally.”

The man who is trying with all his might to be a good student or a good instructor, a good employer or a good employee, a good neighbor, a good citizen, a good husband and father, is in a much better way spiritually than he would be if he were cultivating himself or trying to feel that he was “entirely sanctified.” He will make more headway by faithfully serving those interests committed to his care than he would by lifting steadily on his own mental and moral boot-straps for a hundred years.

How clear this was in the life of the Perfect, the Typal, the Representative Man, the Son of Man! "I am the good shepherd," he said, "and I lay down my life for the sheep." He was not intent on saving his own soul or upon cultivating his own inner life—his eyes were upon the sheep. He was ready to lay down his life fighting the wolf, fighting the forces of evil, not for the sake of getting hurt or to make a martyr of himself; He was doing it for the sake of the defenseless sheep.

"No man taketh it from me," he said. "I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment I received of my Father." He chose the way of self-sacrifice, and found it the way of the highest self-realization which this world has ever seen. He bore the cross, not that he might win the crown—the cross itself was a crown, a crown of thorns at first, but when the hour came, a crown of honor and rejoicing.

Hear this plain, straight word from one of our American soldiers in the Great War! He was moving unsteadily across the floor of the hospital on crutches. "You lost your leg for your coun-

try," one of the nurses said to him sympathetically.

"No," he replied with some impatience, "I did not lose it—I gave my leg for my country." He had entered into that higher patriotism which comes only through self-sacrifices, by giving, as his own act and choice, his best to his country.

Let every one know once for all that not by self-seeking, but by self-surrender do men achieve! Those silly people who are forever "chasing culture" for its own sake, do not arrive! The woman who is always looking at herself and trying to add cubits to her stature by holding the thought of something confessedly too large for her capacity is simply making herself ridiculous. If one would bring his life to its own best estate, let him gather up all his powers, physical vigor and mental grasp, social grace and moral purpose, offering them in glad devotion to those interests which need help.

The way to rise is to stoop down to some deed of kindness done in the spirit of Christ. The Master Himself, knowing that He was come from God and that the Father had given all things into His hands, rose from supper and began to wash

the feet of eleven tired and travel-stained men. The radiance of that unselfish deed has shone out through all the world. He stood there with the basin of water in one hand and a towel in the other saying to the ages, "I give you an example!"

Every healthy nature craves also the esteem of its fellows. Men enjoy appreciation and they ought to enjoy it. They were made for it, and it was made for them. The odd stick who is always flinging out sneers about popularity, declaring that he does not care a straw about what people say of him, probably cares more than any of us. He has a notion that by his scornful attitude he will attract more attention than he would if he shaped his course in a more rational way. His head too is swollen out of shape. It is only human to enjoy appreciation.

But that desire for appreciation is a thing to be watched. The small boy who will not do his duty unless he is being praised and petted for it all the while is in a bad way. He is liable to grow up into a self-conscious little prig, as unreliable as

the wind. The man who will not perform unless he is in the limelight receiving applause and bouquets is made of poor stuff. He is lath and plaster where there should be quartered oak. The motives which impel men to run straight should rest upon something more secure than the tides of popular acclaim. Those tides ebb and flow—in the nature of the case they cannot be always at the flood.

However strongly any man may desire the esteem of his fellows, here also the method of indirection furnishes the surest road. The fellow who is forever saving his popularity loses it, while the man who forgets all about it in his desire to go straight along about his business and do his work well, meriting esteem whether it is expressed or not, is making the best sort of bid for the esteem of others. If he serves well his customers or his clients, his pupils or his parishioners, his employer or his employees, showing himself worthy of the best they can give, it is as sure as sunrise that they will turn around and serve him with that measure of appreciation which will be a joy forever.

College men tell us that when you play football with a fellow, it does not take long to find out what kind of a fellow he is. The real inwardness of the man speedily comes out. The true man is not there to achieve some private and personal success of his own. He is there to take his place in the line-up, his color in the pattern, his full share of the hard knocks as they come, merging his own efforts in a common effort to win the victory in whose glory the whole team will share. It is an experience which shows quickly whether the man is all wool or only thirty-cent shoddy. If he puts himself in for all he is worth to serve the common interest, the rest of the team will turn around and serve him with all the honor he deserves.

The Master was drilling twelve young men for a task harder than the winning of a football game. He was to entrust to their hands the fate of the whole movement to which he had given his life. He warned them against casting their eyes at the grand stand. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them. When thou doest thine alms, sound not a trumpet before thee." When you start out to do a good deed or to live

a good life, do not hire a brass band to go along. The least bit of showy display stains the quality of an action. Let each man just do it, and he will have all the appreciation that will be good for him.

The power of plain every-day friendliness is not half understood. There was a professor at Harvard some years ago—he has gone to his reward now—who was easily the best-loved man in the Yard. He was not what we call in our silly phrase “a good mixer”—he was almost shy in the modesty of his manner. He had none of the qualities which go to make up what is known as “personal magnetism.” He had no particular ability as a public speaker, but whenever he appeared, or whenever his name was mentioned, the boys cheered louder than they did for anybody else.

He was so absolutely sincere; he was so simple, straightforward, and thorough in all his work! And those young fellows, who might have been supposed by people who did not know them to prefer something prancing and showy, took him to their hearts as they did no other man on the faculty. They were putting their own solid en-

dorsement on the principle contained in those familiar words—"If thou wilt serve people by taking an unselfish interest in their affairs, they will be thy servants forever."

Every healthy nature craves also the sense of God's favor. The Great White Throne where I must stand and give account is not up yonder in the clouds. It is in here where I am, in here where God is,—where my God is. It is in here that I must meet Him face to face. And no amount of outward success or popular applause can ever take the place of that moral self-respect which every honest man will feel. Unless he can look himself in the face with unsparing candor and know that his purposes are true, his aspirations high, he is lost.

Men have tried all sorts of methods to gain that sense of divine favor. They have tried holy pilgrimages to sacred places such as Rome and Jerusalem, Mecca and Benares. They have tried fasting, self-denial, and all manner of ascetic practices, going without food, without clothing, without baths for days and weeks together. They

have tried the rigorous use of certain religious exercises, saying the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed a hundred times on end, or reading the Bible through in course in a week, or going to church and taking the sacrament every day for a month.

Now any one of those things, honestly used, might have value, but the common feeling to-day is that in seeking for the sense of divine favor along those lines men were barking up the wrong tree. The thing they sought was not there.

We have learned the deeper meaning of humane service. We are recognizing the prophetic quality of this social unrest. The grief and the pain, the sin and the shame of earthly life do not lie within the will and purpose of our Maker. They have no rightful or permanent place in this world of ours. We are here not only to relieve them, but to remove them. When we are working wisely, nobly, usefully, to bring human life up to its rightful estate, we become co-laborers together with God. We know Him through an intimacy of fellowship in that common endeavor which will never be attained by those who seek for it through a

private sort of piety held apart from the plain needs of the social order.

The old artificial distinction between "things sacred and things secular" has largely faded out, leaving only a clearer, firmer line between the things which are right and the things which are wrong. The great right things are all sacred, whether they are found in the church or in the school-room, in the market-place or in the polling-place. And the man who is striving to make home life a fairer and sweeter factor in society; the man who is striving to make education not only the training of the mind, but the consecration of the spirit; the man who is striving to make his business a social utility, a means of bringing together the resources of earth and the needs of society; the man who is striving to make the civic life of his community a miniature copy of the great moral order which enfolds us—all these men in serving these valued human interests are serving and knowing the God who has all these things in his holy keeping. They are finding their way into His favor to go no more out.

When the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne

of His glory, dividing the sheep from the goats, he will say to those on his right hand, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. I was hungry and ye fed me; I was naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me."

"Then shall the righteous say, Lord when? When saw we thee hungry?" They had been doing kind deeds without recognizing the far-reaching significance of them. The Master will say to them, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, ye did it unto me." In the modern emphasis upon humane action we are witnessing the beginnings of what is destined to become "the social incarnation of God" in the higher life of the race. The man who makes it the habit of his life to join in that high endeavor is walking with sure, firm tread into an immediate sense of the divine favor. The big head defeats its own ambitions, while the humble and the contrite heart wins for itself life eternal.

THE WOMAN WHO PAINTED HER FACE

VII

THE WOMAN WHO PAINTED HER FACE

ELIJAH has been called "the Prophet of Fire." He was a red-hot sort of man. His heart flamed with indignation in the presence of meanness or cruelty. His first recorded word was the threat of a coming drought which parched the fertile fields of Samaria as a punishment upon the nation for its evil doing. When he rebuked the wicked rulers of his day, his words were scorching. When he won his victory over the false priests of Baal at the top of Mt. Carmel, he called upon God to "answer by fire." He finally left the world, we are told, in a chariot of fire. He was a red-hot man and his radical methods were needed—no soft-spoken, mild-mannered, temperate sort of man could have won out in the presence of the flagrant, impudent wrong-doing of that period.

He lived in the reign of a wicked king and a still more wicked queen. The Assyrians had been pushing their victorious armies further and further into the south. This pressure from the north had driven the people of Israel closer to Phœnicia, their neighbor on the west. It was a day when foreign treaties and entangling alliances were in the air. Nations were joining with nations to withstand the common foe.

When Ahab, the King of Israel, was a young man, his father married him to a Tyrian princess. She was a forceful, handsome young woman, and Ahab, who was never more than "a half-portion," was quite content. It was a shrewd thing to do and the practical politicians of Israel nodded their heads in glad approval. It meant a useful alliance with Tyre. Those Phœnician ports would be profitable for Hebrew merchants, and whatever is good for trade is sure to be regarded in certain quarters as brilliant statesmanship.

But there was a big nasty fly in this pot of Phœnician ointment. This foreign princess Jezebel, when she married the Hebrew king Ahab, brought her foreign deities with her. She insisted that a

temple to Baal be erected in the Valley of Samaria. She brought her own priests to carry on the worship in that heathen sanctuary. Queens naturally must be allowed spiritual privileges of their own choosing. And the first thing Israel knew, this nation whose God was the Lord had a full-fledged section of degrading heathenism openly operating right there within its own borders.

The people were divided in their allegiance. Some of them held to their faith in the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; some of them went over to Baal, the God of fertility, the deity who was supposed by his followers to preside over the productive and the reproductive processes of Nature.

Then this prophet of fire arraigned the people for their vacillating attitude. "How long do you limp between the two sides?" he cried. He was thinking of a man standing now on one foot and now on the other, tottering from one side to the other. He would have the people make up their minds and go where they belonged. "If Jehovah be God, follow him! If Baal, then follow him."

His phrase went straight to the mark, like an arrow from the bow. How many people go limping from one side to the other! When religion is popular—when Henry Ward Beecher is stirring up the hearts of the people of Brooklyn, or Phillips Brooks is arousing the hearts of the people of Boston, or Harry Emerson Fosdick is moving the men of Manhattan to think about God—then these people limp over to that side and become religious. When the religious atmosphere is cold and wickedness seems to be prevailing, they limp back and are found again with the world, the flesh, and the devil. “How long halt ye between two opinions.”

“If Jehovah be God, follow him! If Baal, then follow him!” But “the people answered him not a word.” Their reply to his fervent appeal was an empty silence. In the presence of this brave prophet of the living God, they were afraid to say “Baal.” In the face of the well-known attitude of the king and the queen, they were afraid to say “Jehovah.” Silence is not always golden. They still hesitated between two opinions.

The prophet proposed a trial by fire at the top of Mt. Carmel. He called upon the rival claimants to build altars to their respective deities, lay sacrifices thereon, and call upon their deities to answer by fire.

When this was done, it presented a striking scene. On one side four hundred and fifty priests of Baal—on the other side Elijah, the Tishbite, standing alone! On one side the well-dressed objects of the royal favor, fat and sleek, for they were fed at the queen's table—on the other side a man gaunt, half-naked, with a leather girdle about his loins, who had been claiming his scanty fare from the ravens! But on the one side there was nothing but an empty, useless idol to serve as the object of a mistaken devotion—on the other side there was the living God! Naturally, it was the living God who won the day. He answered by fire. When the people saw it, they fell on their faces and uttered the cry which echoed across the plain of Esdraelon! "Jehovah is God! Jehovah is God!"

Then the people of Israel rose up in their re-

covered zeal for the true God and put the false priests of Baal to the sword. It was a rough time and they knew nothing about the spirit of religious tolerance. They slaughtered the priests of Baal by the brook Kishon until not one of them was left.

This action brought the first clash of interest between Elijah and the wicked queen. "When Ahab told Jezebel what Elijah had done and how he had slain her prophets with the edge of the sword," she ripped out an oath of vengeance. "So let the gods do to me and more also if I make not his life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." This bold prophet of fire was compelled to flee for his life a day's journey into the wilderness.

There came a little later another bone of contention. There was a man by the name of Naboth who owned a vineyard near the king's palace. The king wanted it for a flower garden. He said, "Give me thy vineyard for a garden, because it is near my house."

But Naboth refused—"God forbid that I should part with the inheritance of my fathers." It was

only a bit of sentiment which made him cling to that particular piece of ground, but it was a wholesome sentiment which kings would do well to respect.

Then the little king was peeved. He came to his house heavy at heart and laid him down upon his bed and turned his face to the wall and would not eat. He was a man of small build and this petty disappointment bowled him over.

Here Jezebel his queen, who was no such weakling, came to the front! "Why is thy spirit so sad?" she asked. When he told her, she taunted him with his cowardice—that was not the way things were done among kings in her country. "Dost thou govern the kingdom of Israel? Rise and eat bread and let thine heart be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth."

She was a regular *Lady Macbeth*, born out of due time. She was not a woman to let "I dare not" wait upon "I would." She was not "too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way." She too might have said to her weak-kneed husband, "Let me pour my spirit in thine ear, and chastise with the valor of my tongue all that

impedes thee from the golden round." "I will give thee the vineyard," she said in her imperious fashion—and the king knew that the thing was just as good as done.

Jezebel directed that a fast be proclaimed and that this man Naboth be given an exalted position. She arranged that two paid liars be hired to swear that they had heard him curse God and the king. On this trumped-up charge of blasphemy and treason he was to be taken out and stoned to death. Then, the property of a man executed for treason being forfeit to the state, his vineyard would be turned over to Ahab, the king. "I will give thee the vineyard!" Where there is a will there is a way! What are right and wrong or the Constitution or the Ten Commandments or anything else among friends!

It was a superb program for robbing an innocent man of his land and of his life. This woman was a genuine artist in crime. When any one wants to do wrong, there is always some one at hand to show him the way. Eve will lead Adam to the tree of forbidden fruit. The high priests will show Judas how to put money in his purse by be-

traying his Master. *Lady Macbeth* will show the Thane of Cawdor how to be king without waiting for the slow processes of nature to remove Duncan from the throne. And here is Jezebel pointing the nearest way to the object of the king's desire. "I will give thee the vineyard!"

The program was carried out without a single hitch. It went off as smoothly as a well-planned, carefully rehearsed church wedding. The story reads like some graphic account of the event in the next morning's paper.

They proclaimed the fast and set Naboth on high. The two paid liars bore witness against him, saying that Naboth had cursed God and the king. They carried him out of the city and stoned him until he died. Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise and take possession of the vineyard, for Naboth is dead."

The king arose at dawn to ride down from Samaria to Jezreel to take possession of his vineyard. But, alas, his joy was short lived! News of his crime had come to the prophet Elijah. What an hour for the prophet of righteousness!

Here was his work cut out for him and laid ready to his hand!

He knew that there was a God in Israel and that private citizens had rights which cannot be overridden by grasping kings and queens. He was a tribune of the people proclaiming in sublime fashion that "the welfare of the people is the highest law of the land." When the king drove up to take possession of his vineyard, there at the gate stood the swarthy figure of this stern prophet of the living God! The guilty king had sinned in vain. Half in anger and half in anguish, he faltered out, "Hast thou found me, oh mine enemy?"

Here was evil-doing facing righteousness—and it was afraid! Here was guilt facing conscience—and it shivered like a leaf in the wind! Here was the whole method of seeking pleasure and advancement in ways which God does not approve having the cup of joy dashed from its lips by the prophet of the Most High!

"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at our puny efforts to outwit Him and climb up some

other way into the kingdom of joy. The King of Israel thought that he was coming down that morning to take possession of a lovely vineyard—he met the day of judgment in the person of that prophet of God. He heard his own death-warrant read to him. “God is not mocked!” Men reap as they sow—where the seed is selfish cruelty, the harvest will be something frightful. Let every man therefore take heed how he sows!

Then follows the terrible denunciation which fell hot and fast from the lips of this prophet of fire. “I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to do evil. Behold, the Lord shall bring evil upon thee and sweep thee away! The Lord last night saw the blood of Naboth—where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs shall lick thine.” And of Jezebel, the queen, this stern prophet said, “The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel.”

He was addressing the king and queen of his own country, but, because they were false and cruel, he did not mince matters. He called spades spades and clubs clubs and all the other suits by their

right names. He never referred, after the manner of some, to evil-doing as "good in the making" or as "one of the growing-pains of virtue."

He was a plain, blunt man who spoke right on. As Hamlet said of the sharp wind on that winter night when the ghost walked, his tongue "bit shrewdly"—it was "an eager and a nipping" tongue.

It was a fearful threat which he uttered, and when the time came, right fearfully was it fulfilled. Turn over a few leaves of Scripture and you find the gruesome story which records the dire fulfillment of his prophetic word! When Jehu came to the throne he promptly made war upon the guilty pair. He was a rough man, and his deeds were no less harsh than his words. He did not hesitate to strike down all those who made bold to oppose his own imperious will. He moved at once against those rival claimants to the throne.

In the battle which followed, Ahab the king was killed in combat and the dogs licked his blood as he lay upon the field. Then Jehu drove swiftly to the royal palace. Jezebel had been told of his

approach and "she painted her face and tired her head," hoping to touch some tender spot in the man's heart by her personal charm. She had been a handsome woman in her youth, and like many another faded beauty, she felt that it was not too late yet to make an impression upon Jehu by her good looks. She painted her face and arranged her hair and looked out of the window, ready to smile upon the new king and thus secure her own safety.

But Jehu was a man untouched by delicate consideration. When he saw her at the upper window of the palace, he called out to the eunuchs who stood near, after the manner of royal households in the Orient, "Throw her down! Throw her down!"

They hesitated for a moment—it seemed brutal. But when the command was repeated and they saw that Jehu's star was in the ascendant and that he was not a man to be trifled with, they did not flinch. They promptly seized the unhappy woman and threw her out of the upper window.

When her body struck the pavement, Jehu drove his chariot over her and her blood was sprinkled

on his horses. Then he went in to eat and drink and celebrate his victory over these rival aspirants to the throne. When he had eaten, he said to his servants, "This accursed woman was a king's daughter—see to it that they bury her."

But when they went out to bury her they found nothing left but the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. The street dogs had eaten and carried away all the rest.

This woman had put first that which is not first. She thought that her face and her charm would carry her through, regardless of her qualities of mind and heart. The Scriptures are never squeamish about the natural appeal which sex makes. They uniformly show their good sense by frankly recognizing the power of womanly beauty. In how many passages do we find it stated that "the woman was fair to look upon." The fact is named as one of the significant and determining elements in the situation.

It has been so from the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end! The beauty of a woman's face is a force to be reckoned with.

We are told sometimes that "beauty is only skin deep," but that is deep enough for all practical purposes. Some of the would-be beauty which is displayed upon the streets in these days is not even "skin deep"—it is only a thin veneer. Where beauty is not artificial, but real, it may have genuine value. If a man is coming into close personal relations with a woman (if he is intending to marry her, for example, and will see her every day, see her when she is looking her best and when she is looking her worst and at all stages between), it will mean a great deal to that man if she is a woman that he can look at with some measure of comfort. When any woman, older or younger, becomes careless and indifferent about her personal appearance, she is throwing away that which may have real power in the working out of the finest purposes of human life.

This Jezebel of old sought to gain her ends by painting her face. She has her ill-advised successors in these times on which we have fallen. The loveliness of nature, in the judgment of many of her modern sisters, does not suffice—they are laying upon it thick and fast the awkward attempts of

an unworthy art. The devotees of this mistaken art have become so deficient in the natural modesty of a woman's nature that in the most public places, they now produce their paint-pots and their powder-boxes and proceed in the eyes of all beholders to daub their features with a fresh supply of color.

The effect oftentimes is gruesome rather than winsome. When a young woman's mouth is crimson from her liberal use of a lip-stick, when her eyebrows are penciled into an unnatural blackness, and when the rest of her face might indicate an unhappy tumble into a flour-barrel, men are moved to unseemly merriment rather than to admiration. On many a woman's countenance in these days the colors are so gaudy that, by contrast, the sight of clean, healthy, human flesh, in the face of one of the fairer members of society, shines forth with an added beauty.

But when all has been said which can be said about the charm of personal appearance, the fact still stands that there are qualities of mind and heart which never wither nor fade—and in the long, hard race of life, they win out against mere

beauty of face and figure. In that description of ideal womanhood in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, physical beauty has small place, while certain spiritual qualities bulk large.

“Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Strength and honor are her clothing. She openeth her mouth with discretion and in her lips is the law of kindness. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, and her children rise up and call her blessed. She shall do them good all the days of her life, and her price is above rubies.” Here are womanly values which last and grow as the years come and pass!

The two main faults in the make-up of this woman whom we have been studying in this short story were these: first, she was a woman without any real religion. A godless man is to be deplored but, Good Lord, deliver us from a godless woman!

When Thomas Carlyle saw his mother, the noblest being he had ever known as a child, bowed in humble, tender reverence before One whom she

knew to be better than herself, his heart was touched to finer issues for all the years that lay ahead.

The strongest, sweetest, holiest earthly influence that has ever entered my own life was the example and companionship of my own Christian mother—and millions of other men would instantly rise up and pay the same tribute to their mothers.

Alas, poor Jezebel! She had a sort of brazen, partisan loyalty to the cult of Baal, but she lacked the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the spirit of devotion, which lies at the heart of all that is best in womanly character.

The other glaring fault in her life was the fact that she was without the milk of human kindness. Energy, ambition, shrewdness, and a certain fierce loyalty to her own side in the battle of life, all these she had in generous measure. But the fruits of the spirit as Paul named them, "Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, mildness, self-control"—these fair fruits did not grow upon the moral hillsides of her nature.

"So many claims, so many creeds,
So many ways that wind and wind,

But what the race most sorely needs
Is just the art of being kind."

In this busy, hurried, restless world men are constantly overlooking the tremendous power and significance of plain, simple, every-day kindness. It oils the wheels and smooths the path and gives us added power in the way that goeth upward.

The main guarantee for the moral stability and progress of any nation is to be found in the high quality of its womanhood. Every generation comes into being through the sweet portals of mother love. And the way it bears itself when it reaches maturity and enters actively upon the scene is determined mainly by the character of the motherhood which stood back of it.

Run your eye along the files of history and you will find this significant fact: not all of the great and good men of the race had great fathers, but almost without exception they had great mothers. The father of Moses, the great Hebrew leader and law-giver, is not mentioned even by name—apparently he did not amount to enough to get into the record. But the mother of Moses is fully

described as a woman of high purpose and splendid moral courage.

It is unusual to find any one who has ever heard the name of the father of Augustine, the great Roman theologian and Christian leader. The whole world knows the name and character of Monica, the mother of Augustine.

John Wesley's father was a feeble, commonplace Anglican clergyman, who never made his mark in the world. Susanna, the mother of the Wesleys, was a woman in a thousand.

Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln, was a simple-hearted, roving type of man, almost a ne'er-do-well, for he could scarcely get bread to put into the mouths of his children. Nancy Hanks, the mother of Lincoln, as judged by her personal qualities, was a woman in a million.

So on through the list,—look them over sometime if you are curious,—the great men did not all have great fathers, but in almost every case they had great mothers. The motherhood of a nation becomes the measure of its honor and of its advancement.

It is for every woman, young and old, to accept

that full measure of dignity which goes with her position as a woman; and to accept also the full measure of responsibility which attaches to that honor. It is for every man, young and old, by that spirit and habit of chivalry, which is one of the highest notes of genuine manliness, to aid in the development and maintenance of that true womanhood at its best.

Every man should be able to say to some woman (and that woman the one woman in the world, so far as he is concerned) what the poet said:

“I love thee then,
Not for thy face, which might indeed provoke
Invasion of strange cities, but
Because Infinity upon thee broods,
And thou art full of meaning and of promise.

Thou sayest what all the seas have yearned to say;
Thou art what all the winds have uttered not;
Thy voice is like sweet music from another world.”

THE MAN WITH A HANDICAP

VIII

THE MAN WITH A HANDICAP

THE men who are one hundred per cent. effective, are few and far between. They are reserved mainly for popular fiction and for theatrical performances. In everyday life the great main traffic of human existence is being carried along by men who are fully aware that they are not quite up to the mark.

These men may not be running on one cylinder, but they never deceive themselves into thinking that they are all high-priced, six-cylinder affairs. When they strike the hills and find the road steep, they do not balk nor whine. They simply "throw back" into low gear and keep going, until at reduced speed they find themselves at the top.

How much of the world's best work has been done by men who were terribly handicapped! Milton was blind, yet no man of his generation who had eyes was able to see what he saw. No other

man could write "Paradise Lost" or justify the ways of God to man as he did.

Abraham Lincoln was poor, homely, awkward, and in his whole life he was privileged to attend school but twelve months all put together. Yet he wrote his name above every other man in our American history.

Phillips Brooks became a great preacher—the charm and power of his spiritual appeal found its way to the hearts of Americans and of Englishmen alike. But when he was a young man he stammered. One of his teachers told him on a certain occasion that in choosing a vocation he would naturally have to leave out of consideration any calling which would involve any form of public address. That was all the instructor knew about it.

Charles Darwin was a lifelong invalid who scarcely knew a day without physical distress. Yet he pushed back the boundaries of scientific knowledge and ushered in a new era of scientific procedure by his study of organic evolution and by writing "The Origin of Species."

Paul, the apostle, had a thorn in his flesh. No one knows the precise nature of it. Some scholars

claim that it was a partial blindness; others maintain that it was epilepsy; one commentator recently advanced the notion that it was chronic malaria—he may have lived at one time along the Ohio River.

We do not know what the thorn in the flesh was,—it was a serious affliction of some sort. The apostle besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed. It was not removed—it remained. His strength had to be wrought out under conditions which would have spelled defeat for many a man. His great work was accomplished with that thorn in the flesh jagging him at every movement he made.

How many men and women there are who have to “face the music,” played not at all as they would like to hear it, but with many a jarring discord! Yet they face it and move ahead in the path of duty, let the tune come as it may! Men who never turn their backs, but march breast forward!

Here in this short story we read that “Naaman, captain of the host of the King of Syria, was a great man with his master because by him deliv-

erance had come to Syria.” He was honored by all the people for his valiant service to the state. “He was also a mighty man of valor—but he was a leper.”

The last words strike an ugly, jarring note. They seem to destroy all the melody of those statements which went before. Here was a man standing high in the favor and confidence of the king! He was a popular idol, held in honor by all the people because he had brought deliverance to his country. He was also in his personal make-up a man of valor. He had the genius of a great commander and was every inch a soldier, a kind of Kitchener of Khartum on the roster of the Syrian army.

“But he was a leper,” and that spoiled everything. It seemed so utterly unjust—he had done nothing to deserve such a terrible fate. There were rascals in Syria, hundreds of them, at that very hour, who might just as well have had leprosy as not—they would never have been missed. They could have put in their time having leprosy without any loss or hurt to society. But this man, able, noble, efficient! Why under heaven could

he not have been blessed with sound, clean health!

He had so much of value in his life, but with leprosy thrown in, it all went for naught. If he had been ready to stand off and curse God and die, we could have forgiven him. If he had been in a mood to hurl an impudent defiance at the whole order of things which had dealt him such a sorry hand, we could have understood that mood. Leprosy was a bitter ingredient to be dropped into that cup of joy which he was prepared to drink. This is the lesson which is usually drawn from those words.

But in my use of the story, I would like to turn it end for end. It can be done without doing any violence to the meaning—I am sure that it will bring out the real meaning of the incident more clearly. Put the head of the story where the foot now is! Put the head of it over near the window where the light will fall upon it! Read the story in this way!

Now Naaman was a leper, but in spite of that fact, he was a great man with his master, the King of Syria. He was held in the highest honor by the

people for the public service he had rendered. He was also a mighty man of valor, winning victories not only on the field of battle, but in those hard fights which every man wages in the depths of his own soul. He was indeed a leper, but he was all this in spite of his leprosy. His affliction then becomes a dark screen, on which all those shining qualities of his life are more effectively displayed.

The scholars tell us that the words used here indicates the "white leprosy," which may work for a long time underneath the skin. It may not show itself upon the surface of a man's body for years. During that period he is not banished from the society of his fellows. In the end, of course, it means a lingering, loathsome, horrible death.

But with that ugly thing lurking in his blood, with that enemy of his peace eating its way beneath his skin, with that wicked disease moving with slow and stealthy tread toward the very citadel of his life, this brave man goes ahead. He will do his work and live his life as long as he may, with his head up and his eyes front. He was a leper, but in spite of that terrible handicap, he showed him-

self honored, esteemed, and beloved by the king and by all the people.

This is the particular aspect of the story which I would like to emphasize—it reveals the hidden possibilities which lie before the many lives which are heavily handicapped.

One can scarcely name a more serious handicap than the one this man suffered. He was a leper—one would rather be blind or deaf, or both blind or deaf. One would rather lose an arm or a leg, or both arms and both legs, than to have leprosy in his blood. One would rather be poor—with health and a day and the world before us, what is poverty, compared with leprosy? One would rather be ignorant, so ignorant that he could not read nor write. The world is full of books and teachers; experience itself is a great university, conferring upon men all manner of the highest sort of degrees and advancing them toward mental efficiency. Ignorance can be overcome if there is no enemy gnawing at one's vitals. But leprosy! It makes almost any unfortunate man's lot seem

easy by comparison just to cast one's eyes for a moment at Naaman.

His handicap was indeed a heavy one, but his experience is in a sense representative. How few people there are who are not suffering from some serious hindrance! There is always some out about any situation. There is another side to it. There is slag in everything—almost everything. There are spots on the sun. The very air we breathe and the water we drink bring to us oftentimes the microbes of disease.

The joy of winning an honorable success is often tinged with sadness by the thought of the reduced vitality, the shortened life consequent upon the extra effort put forth to win that distinction. The people we trust implicitly do not all turn out to be worthy of our confidence—some of them fall down. The people we love are not in all probability as fine as we think they are—our very preference and affection for them clothe them in our eyes with added beauties which they do not possess. One can scarcely name a situation where there are not certain offsets to be reckoned in against the satisfaction we might otherwise feel.

How many people are there in your own acquaintance, do you suppose, with whom you would be willing to change places if you knew everything? In my own work as the pastor of a large city church for many years, I was brought naturally into close and confidential relations with a great many homes and a great many hearts. I was amazed to find out how many skeletons there were in the closets of lives which were outwardly prosperous and happy. I did not suppose that there were bones enough in the community to make all those skeletons, yet there they were, grinning in ghoulish fashion at the brave attempts of those people to be happy.

Men and women bearing their loads of disappointment! Men and women facing the fact that the brightest hopes of their earlier years had gone down in utter and final defeat. They often made no sign. They were going straight ahead in the line of duty with cheer on their faces, with courage in their hearts, with no whine upon their lips. But they knew, every one of them, that trouble was gnawing within.

He was a leper! His friends did not know it as

yet, but he knew it. His face went white as a sheet when his physician told him what those symptoms meant. His heart sank like lead, for there in the Orient he had seen man after man struggle and fail and die before the inroads of that dread disease. He felt in that hour as if he never could smile again.

You may know all about it. The blow may have fallen upon your life in a different way. It may have fallen upon quite another section of interest, but there came an hour when you too saw your bright hopes blasted as if by the curse of God. There are many people about us who look out and see ahead of them obstacles insuperable, blocking the way of advance toward any realization of their hopes.

Yet in many cases a high measure of honorable success has been achieved, not because of, but in spite of, serious handicaps. Naaman was a leper, but he had character and ability—the hand of disease had not touched these characteristics; and he so invested his finer qualities as to win the favor

and confidence of the king. He was a great man with his master even though he was a leper.

He had rendered a noble public service, which had brought him the gratitude and affection of the people—the hand of disease had not and could not touch that. The people would hold him ever in the highest honor and esteem though he might die a thousand deaths from leprosy.

He was in his own personality a mighty man of valor, brave, patient, cheery, chivalrous—the hand of disease had not touched these fine qualities. It could not, because these qualities belong in the realm of that which is unseen and internal. He went right along, therefore, living his life, doing his work, achieving an honorable success even though he was a leper.

Here is a man within one's own circle of friends, broken in health! He once had a body which enabled him to walk down street and do his full day's work with all the easy joy of splendid physical efficiency. That day has gone. He feels now sometimes as if all the organs in his body

were engaged in a kind of general conspiracy and insurrection against his peace. He has strikes, lock-outs, and boycotts going on inside of him at all hours of the day and night. He feels as if all the malignant spirits of the invisible world had taken up their abode in him. He calls them "legion," as that poor fellow did in Gadara who thought that he was inhabited by a whole regiment of wicked devils.

His doctor has told him that at his age there is no immediate prospect that things will ever be much better. He is broken and crippled for life. He may have a long list of blessings, a good wife, interesting children, an attractive business or profession, a wide circle of friends, but he is broken in health. He feels sometimes as if he too would like to curse God and die. He does say what Job said, "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass. He hath set darkness in my path."

Here is a second man who has met with serious financial reverses! He was very prosperous at one time. He was living on Easy Street, but he lived at Number 13. Somehow misfortune knocked at

his door and he was in. He was in and he was led to make certain investments which seemed promising at the time, but they all failed. He trusted in the good judgment and integrity of certain men with whom he had associated himself, but they fell down and dragged him down with them.

Now when the grey hair is beginning to show above his ears, he does not feel capable of that push and lunge in the commercial world which was once a joy to him. His income is reduced and his resources are crippled. He feels it more for those who are dependent upon him than for himself. He hoped to do much better for them. He has a great many blessings if one were to count them all up, but the cold, dark clouds of adversity hang in his sky, making it overcast. And he fears that the harsh winds of want may yet blow out of those clouds in the years that lie ahead. He is a man with a handicap.

Here is a woman who is touched in that section of her life which is still more vital! She made an ill-advised marriage. She did not mean to when she entered into it with all the enthusiasm of honest affection. She expected to write another chapter

in the book of human happiness for herself and for the man to whom she gave herself.

But it was not long before the fancied beauty of it became ashes, the light of joy was turned into the spirit of heaviness. Her husband is not a wicked man—no breath of scandal rests upon her home. But he is in no sense a companion. Her house is a house and not a home. She has not the slightest intention of breaking it up or of dragging her name and his through the divorce courts, but in the depths of her own soul she is a disappointed woman.

She sees no light and joy ahead when those years shall come when so many people are moved to say, "We have no pleasure in them." The future is all drab and grey. She makes no sign; she never breathes a word of all this to her dearest friend; she thrusts it all deep down into her own breast and goes ahead without a murmur. But she knows, and some of her friends who can read between the lines and beneath the surface know, that she is a woman with a handicap. She may have a number of blessings, but she is not happy in her married life.

We need not prolong the list. These are samples. There is an inexhaustible supply where these came from—more than fifty-seven other varieties.

What are these people going to do about it? Any one of them may turn the corners of his mouth down rather than up, and face the world in that mood. He may allow all the finer aspirations of his soul to droop and fall into disrepair, like the fences on an abandoned farm. He may keep the sense of disappointment alive by feeding and coddling it, exercising it daily until it grows to be a fearful and an unmanageable thing. He may begin to indulge in "the luxury of despair," which is the costliest and most debilitating form of luxury known to idle souls. He may do all that—and that way ruin lies. He may do all that—the men and women who are doing just that with their various handicaps are like the sands of the sea for multitude.

He may, on the other hand, by the grace of God, do this: he may turn that statement regarding Naaman end for end and use it as chart and

compass for his own life voyage. Naaman was a leper, but he was a great man with his master and he was held in high esteem by all the people for the public service he had rendered. He was also in his personal make-up a valorous, knightly, aspiring soul.

That man, who at one time was thinking of an open gas-jet or a pistol or an overdose of morphia, may say to himself in clear firm tones, "I am broken in health, but I will show myself 'the master of my fate, the captain of my soul.' I will face the world, even with this broken vigor, in the mood of a man undaunted."

The other man may say, "I find myself with a reduced income and crippled in resource, but I will show my friends beyond a peradventure that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." A man's life consists of the qualities of mind and heart which he is able to show, uphill or downhill, through thick and through thin.

And the woman may come forward and say, "I have failed in my quest of married happiness, but I will show my fellow-beings and the Lord that a

woman's first business is not to be happy, but to be fine and true, to be kindly and sympathetic, to be hopeful and helpful." And when any one of those disappointed lives faces the future with that high resolve at the helm, he will shape up for himself an honorable career and will reach some desired haven.

How much depends upon the placing of the accent when one says a thing or sings it or lives it! He can say if he chooses, "He had a great many blessings, *but he was a leper*. He may say, on the other hand, if he will, "He was a leper—*nevertheless he achieved all this*, the more honor to him!"

There was a certain life regal in its quality beyond all the other lives which have walked this common earth. But men placed upon it in mockery a crown of thorns. Then they stood off and wagged their heads. "He claimed to be the King of the Jews," they said, "but he is wearing a crown of thorns." It seemed to them a huge joke.

But when He described the situation, He said that the thorns in His life had been woven into a

crown. He gloried in suffering and sacrifice when it was laid upon Him, because in becoming "the Lamb of God He was able to take away the sin of the world. He triumphed because He was willing to go the way of the cross.

How many lives there are which have taken up not His cross, but their own particular crosses and have moved ahead in the way of spiritual achievement! Henry M. Stanley was a poor, abandoned, nondescript boy in a Welsh workhouse. Yet he brought light to the Dark Continent and was honored on all the continents.

Booker T. Washington's mother was a slave—he never knew exactly who his father was—and in his earlier life he was denied those privileges of education which are commonly given to white boys! Yet in spite of everything he became easily the "Black Prince" in that region beyond Mason and Dixon's line by the distinguished service he rendered to his race.

Steiner, of Grinnell, is a product of that conglomeration of races and religions in southeastern Europe—not a very promising field. He came to this country in the steerage as an im-

migrant. Yet no other man of his generation has done so much to interpret the immigrant to himself and to us and to face us all toward the light in dealing with that whole problem which the coming together of these many races in this broad land lays upon the heart of this nation.

Handicapped they were, every man of them, heavily at the start, but they went ahead and did their work undaunted. When the record is written up, the notice of the handicap will be in small type, the achievement will be in head-lines and red ink. They beat their music out, even though all the earlier movements of it were written in the minor key.

In the case of Naaman, the handicap was finally removed. He was directed by the prophet to go down and wash seven times in the River Jordan as a witness to his faith in the Living God. By these repeated acts of obedient trust, his leprosy was cured and "his flesh became again as the flesh of a little child." He was clean, sweet, wholesome, like the body of a well-born, well-kept babe.

It need not have been so. This outcome is not

necessary to the story. Had he died a leper, the record would still have been that of a man, noble and achieving, in spite of the odds against him. Many a man, most men in fact, carry the load through to the end. The broken health is never replaced by the abounding vitality of early life. The crippled fortunes are never restored so that the man may enjoy once more a shining prosperity. The disappointment at home lies heavy upon the heart of that woman until the last page of her earthly history has been read to the bottom.

In so far as Naaman's experience is outward and visible, it cannot be repeated in the experiences of all the broken-hearted, burdened people. But in that which this story symbolizes, in those higher values which are unseen, spiritual, and eternal, the experience can be repeated universally and endlessly.

Here is the prime question, not as to whether one may escape from his handicap, but how this disappointment will leave him! Will it leave him worn and wrinkled, cross and crabbed, in his inner life? Will it, on the other hand, leave him softened and refined, tender and sympathetic

toward all the other disappointed lives of earth? Will he come through at last with the heart of a child?

Here is the final test of one's method of life! There are thousands of men and women who have been burned to a crisp by the fires of adversity which were kindled along their pathways. There are other thousands who have only been melted down into a more loving and lovable quality of being. They have indeed become as little children, entering into the Kingdom of Heaven to go no more out.

This finer form of achievement is made possible by these two factors: the law of compensation operating on behalf of those lives which are crippled in certain of their faculties. Helen Keller did not have the power of sight. She had no sense of hearing. But her sense of touch was wonderful—the delicacy and the sureness of it were marvelous. She learned to converse with others rapidly and accurately solely by the use of her hands. Somehow the other faculties have a way of rising to meet the emergency. Under

the extra pressure of that added obligation laid upon them by the presence of the handicap, they develop into wonderful efficiency.

The other hopeful feature is to be found in the fact that the life made profoundly conscious of its need by some adversity is thereby thrown back all the more completely and confidently upon the help of God. Our strength is made perfect in weakness, because the sense of weakness brings us to our knees and to Him.

When I am weak because of some handicap, then am I made strong in that finer form of strength which endures even to the end. Granted that one's particular misfortune is not to be removed, as was that of Naaman, all the more let him fight the good fight, keep the faith, finish his course, and when the time of his departure is at hand, he will find laid up for him "a crown of rejoicing."

One may, if he chooses, dwell upon these unhappy features in his situation until his heart is bitter as gall and the face of his soul is like ink. But he may, if he chooses, taken this other and nobler line of life. He may follow "in His steps."

Jesus Christ did always those things that pleased the Father, yet men esteemed Him stricken and smitten of God. He went about doing good, living not to be ministered unto, but to minister, yet He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. "He learned obedience," the record says, "by the things that he suffered"—it was a moral achievement wrought out in pain. He tasted the whole human situation for every man, and developed His finer quality of life under pressure.

And every one may by that same mood and by the mighty aid He lends, take up not the cross of Christ, but his own cross, and move ahead in the path of spiritual achievement. One can face his particular line of duty without whining and see it through to the end. Then when men come to write verses about him, as they wrote this story about Naaman, they will say something like this: "He had to fight against heavy odds, but he was a Christian! He was a true Christian!" And that will be a joy and an honor that will never fade.

This high privilege of participation in an august spiritual enterprise is not for the favored few who

have had all the good things of life brought to them on silver trays. It is open on equal terms to all who apply in the spirit of trust, of courage and of high resolve.

“The sun is fixed,
Fixed within reach of every human eye:
The sleepless ocean murmurs for all ears;
The vernal field infuses fresh delight into all hearts;
The smoke ascends as lightly from the cottage hearth
as from the loftiest palace.
He whose soul ponders this true equality
May walk the fields of earth with gratitude and hope.”

THE GIRL WHO RISKED IT

IX

THE GIRL WHO RISKED IT

WHEN one finds this book of Esther in the Bible, he is moved at once to explain, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Its morality is defective—it concedes too much to the wickedness of men's hearts. It is an irreligious book, for it contains nowhere even the name of God. It is the only book in the Old Testament which makes no reference to the Holy Land, which has shown itself such good ground for the production of religious values.

The whole atmosphere of this book of Esther is that of an Oriental harem. The raw material is furnished by the plots and counterplots of the king's favorites. The issue turns upon the ability of a beautiful woman to outwit and overmatch the designing cruelty of a wicked courtier. The last pages of the book show a spirit frightfully narrow and vindictive.

But for all that we are glad to have this short

story in holy writ. It shows us how the Being of Holy Love has worked—not always as He would, but as He could. He has taken the instruments of His purpose, not always from the unstained skies, but from the common earth as well. He has made bare his arm even in the harem of an Oriental king for the accomplishment of a far-reaching spiritual purpose.

There had been trouble in the palace of the king of Persia. The course of true love, such as it was, did not run smoothly. The king's domestic relations were naturally extensive and intricate in an Oriental court, and they had not been marked by peace and sweet content. Vashti, the king's favorite and the reigning queen, had incurred his ill will and had been deposed.

The occasion for the rupture arose in this way. "When the heart of the king was merry with wine he commanded his courtiers to bring Vashti the queen with the crown royal to show the people and the princes her beauty, for she was fair to look upon."

The proposed display of her charms in public in

that day and land may have involved rather more than might appear at first glance. When men's hearts are made merry with wine, their sense of delicacy may be obscured to such a degree that any modest, self-respecting woman would shrink from meeting their desire for an exhibition of her charms. At any rate, the queen refused to come and "the king was very wroth and his anger burned within him."

His courtiers—"the wise men who knew the times," they are called by way of compliment—magnified this act of insubordination on the part of the queen in such a way as to add fuel to the flames of his royal wrath. "This deed of the queen shall go abroad and all the women shall despise their husbands when it shall be reported that the king commanded Vashti to be brought in before him and she came not." They too in that far-off time had the fear of "the new woman" before their eyes, and they saw the domestic peace and tranquillity of the whole nation imperilled.

The fair young queen who refused to display her charms to a lot of men made merry in their cups was deposed by the king's decree and her seat upon

the throne was vacant. Then the courtiers, to divert their royal master, sent into all the provinces and collected a fresh supply of the fairest maidens to be found from whom the king might select a new favorite. It was a "beauty contest" which would have put all the efforts of Atlantic City and its famous boardwalk in the shade. Among the rest who were brought up was a girl named Esther, a Jewess. Her Hebrew blood was not manifest in her appearance, and for prudential reasons she kept the fact of her social connections a secret.

It turned out that this fair young Jewess eclipsed them all. The king was delighted with her and made her the reigning favorite in his harem. She had won her place and her chance not by her wealth, for her people were poor, nor by the social influence of her family, for their names were in no Blue Book—she won a place of distinction in that royal household by her own personal charm.

But there came a cloud in her sky much larger than any man's hand. By the skilful plot of a wicked courtier named Haman, the weak and foolish king was led to publish a decree that on a

certain day all the Jews, men, women, and children, residing in his kingdom should be slaughtered. It was to be a pogrom like that which occurred in Russia at Kishineff, only on a much vaster scale.

When this dire calamity threatened his race, Mordecai the Jew, who had known Esther from her childhood, came to the palace to urge this royal favorite to use her charm and influence with the monarch to avert the disaster from her people. When Mordecai appeared before the young girl richly apparelled and fragrant as a rose with the perfumes of Arabia, he recognized the fact that in this rare beauty of hers lay her opportunity. "Who knoweth," he said as he closed his appeal on behalf of the imperiled Hebrews, "who knoweth, but that thou art come to the kingdom for such an hour as this?"

Happily, the young woman had not been spoiled by the admiration lavished upon her by the king. Her sense of responsibility had not grown flabby in the relaxing atmosphere of that Oriental court with its full measure of luxury. She had remained brave, true, and affectionate. She made a prompt decision—she would bring relief to her people if

she might, even at the peril of her own life. The penalty for approaching the king unasked was death, and she might not be sent for, as one of the women of his harem, until the day set for the slaughter of the unhappy Hebrews had passed. But she said, "I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish."

She knew that she was taking a desperate chance. In those ancient monarchies human life was cheap, while royal etiquette was precious. The penalty for entering the king's presence uninvited was instant death. If Esther approached him unasked and it did not please him to extend his royal scepter indicative of his forgiveness of the breach, her head would be off in an hour.

Even if he allowed her to speak, she might have to confess herself a Jewess, one of those hated people against whom the decree had been issued. In the very act of asking the king to revoke the decree, she would write her own name in the list of the condemned. It was a perilous road which stretched before the eyes of this handsome young woman, comfortably established in the position of

a royal favorite, with everything to lose and nothing to gain by such a venture—nothing except the approval of her own conscience.

The glory of her action lies in the fact that she saw her duty and staked her life on the performance of it. "I will go—and if I perish, I perish."

The old saw, "Nothing venture, nothing have," is true in mining. The man who is unwilling to risk his money in sinking deep and expensive shafts, with no positive assurance that he will find precious metals at the end of them will never grow rich as a miner. It is true in farming. The man who is unwilling to fling away his seed in the spring on the chance of a harvest, will not reap any reward from his fields. It is true in commerce. The man who takes no chances in the world of business will not grow rich. It is true in many of the more stimulating forms of outdoor sport. Nothing venture, nothing have! Playing the game as it must be played, if undertaken at all, involves risk. And the same principle holds true in spiritual life on its higher levels.

Nothing venture, nothing have—the risks of right action must be assumed by those who would win the laurels of moral venture.

It was no sudden dare-devil outburst of that sort of courage which neither stops to count the cost nor to make wise plans. This girl did everything in her power to reduce the risk. She was calm and wise, tactful and far-seeing. She put on her royal apparel, for she recognized the fact that the most beautiful woman alive adds to her attractiveness by being well dressed, even as the picture gains by being well-framed.

She did not rush into the king's presence breathless and panic stricken, tearful and hysterical, to make her appeal—that might have lost her everything. She went in self-possessed, beautiful in person and gracious in manner. And when the king held out his royal scepter as a sign of his permission for her to address him, she did not at once make known her request on behalf of the Jews—she invited him the next day to a banquet which she had prepared for him.

How human it all is! And up to date—it might have been written yesterday! Women in

far-off Persia in the sixth century before Christ and women in the United States of America in the twentieth century after Christ, all know full well that the propitious time to ask a man for anything is just after he has enjoyed a good dinner. That seems to be "the psychological moment," whether the request is for the life of a race or for a new spring hat. Esther prepared a banquet of rare, choice, delicious viands, and when the king had been dined and wine in her charming presence, she made her request.

Her appeal for her people offered in that high mood of self-dedication which had impelled her to say "If I perish, I perish" become a fervent, effectual prayer which availeth much. The heart of the monarch was touched by the sight of her beauty, lit up as it was with an unwonted charm by the intense interest in the fate of her countrymen. He granted her request, the cruel edict was made of no effect, and the lives of the Jews were spared.

How much it means that one young woman in that frivolous, voluptuous court, where she had become a reigning favorite among the king's beauties, could and did intercede for her people!

She was in Persia, but she was not doing as the Persians did, even though that course might have seemed to promise safety and advancement. Her heart beat true to her own people and she announced her readiness to make a personal appeal to the monarch to revoke that terrible decree against the Jews, cost what it might. Her own heart said to her, "Who knoweth but that thou art come to the kingdom for such an hour as this." And she moved out at once in the honorable and courageous use of a great opportunity.

The story shows also how the splendor of a woman's beauty and charm, how her social tact, may become the object of a noble consecration quite as well as the skill of hand or power of brain or the contents of a generous purse. Those gifts of the good God which are distinctively feminine are designed by Him for high ends. They may be used by their fortunate possessors for His glory, for the welfare as well as for the pleasure of his children and for the furtherance of valued moral interests.

The bible shows a wide and varied hospitality

in issuing its invitations to the household of faith. In its catalogue of moral heroes in the little book of Hebrews we are startled at finding Rahab, Samson, and Jephthah sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of faith. It may easily be that our own accustomed recognition of the breadth of God's interest has been altogether too scanty.

The attractive woman may in the spirit of moral faith consecrate her grace to the service of the Master, becoming in the highest sense "a church belle" calling others to the house of God. The man of social skill may by his friendships and hospitality become an effective fisher of men. There is nothing bright and winsome in the whole range of human faculties which may not be used to fill the house of life with a finer fragrance, if only it be laid with the alabaster box at the feet of Christ.

The readiness of Esther to assume the risk of devotion to her people in the face of deadly peril is no less feminine than her exceptional beauty. The true woman shows herself equal to the ventures of faith more commonly than does the man. The

hardest, the highest, and the holiest reaches of the spirit of self-sacrifice are achieved more often by the mothers of the race than by the fathers. The mother love prompts the woman to say "I am going," not knowing what the outcome may be—and that uncalculating devotion carries her into all the lines of sacrificial effort which open before her.

This social order of ours will never be saved from its sin and its shame until greater numbers of men and women in all walks of life are ready for just that sort of moral venture. The race is not being redeemed by those who live cautiously according to the dictates of convention and of expediency. The real agents of the divine redemption stand ready to say, as He said in actions more potent than words, "These things are right and these things we will do. This is our duty and, God help us, we will not flinch, let the outcome be as it may—if we perish, we perish." It may seem at the moment like the cutting off of all prospects of material success, all hope of pleasure, but the world makes spiritual headway by just such moral ventures.

The need of this quality of life is everywhere. There are college students who think it is smart to know the shady side of life—all the more honor to the fellow who stands ready to stake his position in the class, running the risk of being dubbed a prig, upon his resolve to keep his mouth clean, his heart honest, and his purposes right!

Hundreds of thousands of people in social circles are making the limp confession that they cannot stand out against the spirit of self-indulgence and the fierce pursuit of gain. All the more honor to those who are steadily bearing efficient witness to their confidence in the beauty of simplicity, in the value of sincerity, and in the everlasting importance of directing one's main aspirations toward those ends which are not material!

Here are men in political life and in commercial life hanging out the flag of distress! "We are caught in a system," they say. "We cannot help ourselves. The high sense of honor, the genuine consideration for the human values at stake, the purposes which are finer than self-seeking, all these sacred ideals are too lofty for this common

earth.” They have surrendered. The light has faded from their eyes and the song has been silenced in their hearts. All the more honor to those men who are ready to face defeat if need be, to accept a lower place in the world of material values, to be sneered at by others as being “visionary” and “doctrinaire,” in order that they may in political and commercial life hold fast to the highest they see!

In the face of the spirit displayed in this story, it is natural to think of that new recognition which has come to every woman in this country as a civic factor. With all the rights of citizenship freely accorded her, with the ballot in her hand and a new understanding of the meaning of civic responsibility in her head, the intelligent conscientious woman stands ready to make her life count for good government. “The powers that be are ordained of God” for the high ends of order and justice—it is for right-minded men and women by their organized efforts to make that ordination valid in a higher, finer quality of civic life.

“I am a citizen of no mean city,” the apostle

cried when he was hailed before an unjust official. "I too am a citizen," the woman is saying to-day in this broad land, "and my city shall not be mean if it lies within my power to have it otherwise."

When I lived in California, there was a little woman in San Francisco who in ordinary social intercourse was as shy as a high-school girl in her first year. Yet the judges of juvenile and police courts, the superintendents of reformatories, and directors of important charities, eminent physicians confronted with baffling sanitary problems and pastors of strong churches knowing the stress of an exacting service, were continually calling upon this woman for her aid and counsel. She was in the best sense of the phrase "a leading citizen." If San Francisco could have enjoyed the services of a thousand Katherine Feltons in place of one, battling against dirt and disease, against vice and crime, against wretchedness and want, it would have gone far toward curing those evils which make any city mean.

The college woman goes forth in these days to sow the good seed and "the field is the world." Her cap and gown are at once replaced by the less

picturesque garb of the workaday world. Her academic accent, fine and choice as a page of Homer though it may be, speedily gives way to that mode of speech in which the world lives its real life. Her regret that on Commencement Day there were not enough of Phi Beta Kappa keys to go around is soon forgotten, for the great doors of opportunity in this busy twentieth-century life are for the most part unlocked by another sort of key.

But as a direct result of her broader culture and special training, the college woman finds that she can bring to bear upon some group of human lives a fuller measure of physical vitality and charm, a wider outlook and a keener insight, and best of all, that spirit of unselfish devotion which comes most surely from knowing the truth of religion by personal experience. Like Esther of old, she feels that she has come to the kingdom to-day for such an end as this, and she moves ahead in her work that others may have life and have it more abundantly.

In that far-away Persian court, the Lord above saw the peril of his people, and in strange and devious ways He came down to deliver them.

This fair young woman maintained her race loyalty amid the enervating luxury of the harem. She forsook the pleasure of reigning as an unsuspected favorite for a season that she might at the peril of her life confess her own Hebrew blood and rescue her people from disaster. She took the risk, and her courage was rewarded in that the coveted deliverance was accomplished. "And the Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor."

The unselfish heroism of any life which voluntarily surrenders its ease and security in order to enter the lists where danger waits, becomes effective just in proportion to the distance covered by that descent into the dust of conflict. It was the supreme devotion of the Christ, forsaking for the cross, the glory which He had with the Father which to-day is drawing all men to Him.

THE SPECTER AT THE FEAST

X

THE SPECTER AT THE FEAST

THESE pictures in the book of Daniel are like great frescoes. The artist drew his outlines with a free, bold hand. He painted with a big brush. He laid his colors on thick. He used an abundance of red and yellow. The stories which they tell lift up their hands in imperative fashion, like some traffic officer at a busy corner demanding instant attention.

It was Ewald, the sober German scholar and historian, who called this narrative of the Feast of Belshazzar "a true night piece, with all the colors of dissolute, riotous passion, of growing madness, of ruinous bewilderment, and of mysterious horror which finally fell upon that scene of revelry and of death."

The covers were laid for a thousand people. It was like some bankers' dinner in the ballroom of the Hotel Commodore in New York, except that

it was altogether lacking in respectability. The courtiers and the concubines mingled together at the tables in wanton self-indulgence. They fawned upon the dissolute monarch who had spread for them this sumptuous feast. The scene showed nothing of the natural gaiety and audacity of healthy youth at play—it showed rather the offensive weariness of pampered insolence on the part of those whom the round and round of extravagant pleasure had rendered insane. There was the sound of revelry by night, but with no mirth in it—it was only the silly cackle of tired fools.

Here was Belshazzar feasting with a thousand of his lords and with the dissolute women of his court! They were eating and drinking and making merry, as if they knew that to-morrow they would die and never have another chance at happiness. When they had well drunk they craved some fresh sensation to whip their jaded nerves into action. Their natures were calloused and they needed some sharp spur to bring a reaction.

They were like those mad revelers in the city of

New York some years ago who brought a chorus-girl upon the table, baked, apparently, into a huge pigeon-pie, and who hired dancing-girls from the variety theaters to trip along the banquet tables in scanty attire for the gratification of their jaded appetites. When the columns of figures are added up and the balance struck, the net result of riotous self-indulgence weighs much the same in the valley of the Hudson as in the valley of the Euphrates.

The king of the Chaldeans stood ready to meet this mad desire for a fresh sensation. He felt that he could do it with a bit of brazen sacrilege. When his father, the great Nebuchadnezzar, had captured the city of Jerusalem and had destroyed the temple, he had carried away the sacred vessels of the temple and brought them to Babylon. They were there at the time in the king's palace.

Now Belshazzar in his drunken folly ordered his servants to bring those sacred vessels of the Hebrew faith to the banquet table. He directed that they be filled to the brim with red wine. Then at his bidding, and following his royal

example, the countries and the courtezans drank from those sacred cups a toast "To the idols of gold and of silver and brass."

It was a shocking act of profanation. Those vessels from the temple at Jerusalem were as sacred in the eyes of the Hebrew as would be the holy wafer of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the Host in the Mass, to the devout Catholic. Riotous self-indulgence had now made her masterpiece in adding the necessary touch of insolent blasphemy to make its record of iniquity complete.

Then follows the account of the divine rebuke given to those wild revelers at the indecent feast. "In that same hour there came forth upon the wall the fingers of a man's hand and wrote upon the plaster." This mysterious specter came most opportunely—"in that same hour!"

The Almighty is never late! The divine warnings and judgments are punctual to a second. Just as Belshazzar lifted the cup of remembrance to his drunken lips with a shout of derision for those whose sentiments were being trampled under foot, the handwriting appeared upon the wall. Over against that scene of debauchery that myste-

rious hand wrote out the four fateful words where all could see—WEIGHED, WANTING, NUMBERED, FINISHED.

Was the hand which wrote those words real? It was intensely real to that dissolute monarch. It was the most real thing he had ever seen.

Was the cross which the Roman Commander once saw blazing against the sky with these words inscribed upon it, "In this sign, conquer" real? It surely was. It was shaped up out of his own faith and hope and moral imagination, than which there is nothing more real.

When the wicked king saw the handwriting on the wall "his countenance changed"—a look of dark dismay hung upon his drunken face like a piece of *crêpe*. "His thoughts were troubled and his knees smote together." The sense of impending disaster robbed him of his strength until he was unable to stand up. Weighed, Wanting, Numbered, Finished! He had been feeling for some time that as a monarch he was not exactly full weight, and there it was written out on the wall where the whole world could see. The fingers

were "the fingers of a man's hand" but the writing was the writing of God.

The handwriting on the wall was also intensely real to the thousand revelers at that dissolute feast. Those men and women who lived only for pleasure had seen at odd times words of warning written over against their own names, and they had painfully spelled them out by the aid of their guilty consciences. They too had suffered from forebodings that such a reckless mode of life might bring disaster in its train.

Here it was! Here before their eyes was the plain fulfilment of those terrible dreams! There was nothing unreal about it. The best science as well as the best philosophy of our day is saying that present indications point to the conclusion that ultimate reality will be found to be sentient mind or sentient spirit rather than insensate matter. These unseen things which are eternal are real in a way that the things seen and temporal are not.

The mad pursuit of gain, the wild race for pleasure, the reckless dependence upon those forms of satisfaction which are material, momentary, and trivial, the greedy reach for some fresh

sensation which will tickle the tired palate for an hour—all these are laying covers for a thousand here and a thousand there and another thousand further on.

And in the broken sleep, in the loss of normal appetite for the more wholesome experiences of life, in the worn and fretful nerves, and in the chronic weariness of the spirit, the hand of Almighty God is steadily writing over against that mode of life, **WEIGHED, WANTING, NUMBERED, FINISHED!** The hand which writes it all out is intensely real.

“The moving finger writes, and having writ
Moves on; nor all your piety and wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.”

The sin of Belshazzar and of his thousand lords lay in the revolt against nature, in the revolt against God, and in the profanation of that which is sacred, as they entered upon their crazy quest for a fresh sensation. But this revolt against nature and against God finds many another expression besides the drinking of liquor from the

chalice of the communion service. It takes other forms than that of offering mad toasts "to the idols of gold and silver and brass" from the vessels of the house of the Lord.

Wherever men profane that which is sacred, wherever they degrade their faculties by unworthy use, wherever they set the material values of gold and silver in that supreme place which belongs only to the Most High, then the feast of Belshazzar is there repeated. And over against such debasement of human life, the same mysterious hand will write the signs of coming disaster in letters of fire.

The law of God in things physical and in things spiritual is a law from which there is no escape nor appeal. What men sow they reap, and when the seed is wild oats, the harvest will be something frightful.

Marshall Dawson in his little book, "Nineteenth Century Evolution and After," brings out that fact. "Twentieth-century biology," he says, "has a morality which puts Calvinism in the shade"—it has a keener edge than the old Calvinism. "Jonathan Edwards, in his famous sermon on 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,' pictured

the impenitent suspended by a slender thread over a burning pit. Twentieth-century biology paints a more impressive picture." It shows us the fearful physical consequences of wrong-doing. "It points to the animal depths from which we have climbed up and to which reversion is frightfully easy." Evolution is not a one-way street—the traffic does not all move in one direction. It is a reversible process—there may be progress or there may be degeneration.

"In place of that slender thread" to which men may cling and upon which they may climb, "modern science shows us a strong elastic band, by which man is still linked to the animal world from which he has struggled upward; and if he ceases to struggle and to strive for full spiritual freedom, he may be snapped back into the abyss of animalism. Science and religion unite in saying that security is only for those who set their affections upon the things which are above."

Where any man thinks otherwise and shapes his action accordingly, he will see written over against his own best self the same fateful words, **WEIGHED, WANTING, NUMBERED, FIN-**

ISHED. I hope that William Jennings Byran and all the other misguided men who think that the doctrine of evolution destroys religion will read Marshall Dawson's little book.

Some years ago when I was preaching for a few months in London, I met John Burns. He was then a labor member of the House of Parliament. He referred in pleasant terms to the three visits which he had made to the United States. Then looking straight into my eyes with the utmost seriousness, he said to me: "The greatest peril to your country lies in the number of intelligent, well-to-do women who are giving themselves up to lives of idle luxury. They ransack your own cities for pleasure, and then they come to Europe to roam about looking for fresh fields of self-indulgence, while their husbands remain at home to make money to foot the bills." And this was the feeling of John Burns, a plain, blunt man who loved his race.

I tried to assure him that the women of America were not all to be judged by the costly, useless fringe which he saw shopping extravagantly on

Regent Street or lunching in queenly style at the Ritz or the Trocadero, or automobiling gaily down Piccadilly or through the parks. I told him that there were seven thousand women in one city and seventy thousand in another and seventy thousand farther on who had not bowed the knee to Baal. These are our moral reserves, manifesting that true womanhood which is the hope of any nation.

But in whatever measure any section of our womanhood has given itself to that Belshazzar-like mood, it has become a menace to the higher interests of society. Over against all that thoughtless, showy, self-indulgent luxury, which flaunts itself in the face of the pain and the distress there is, waiting to be relieved, the hand of God is writing out those words of warning which show luminous in the dark.

“Thou hast not humbled thine heart. Thou hast lifted up thyself against the God of heaven. Thou hast profaned that which is holy.” Thou hast made thine own self-indulgence a blasphemy against nature and against God. In these searching words of holy writ and of human experience in the large, we may find an indictment well-sustained

by solid fact brought in against the current practice in certain sections of our twentieth-century society. And any one with eyes in his head and a heart to understand may see again the writing fingers and hear again the crunch of the plaster as the words of judgment are inscribed upon the walls which house that manner of life.

Here are merry revelers walking night after night along the great white ways with never a thought of duty or obligation or self-sacrifice! Here are seekers after pleasure moving swiftly upon their endless joy-rides! They would scorn these gloomy forebodings touching their manner of life. They would toss their heads and insist that they can see no signs of approaching judgment or disaster. As it was in the days of Noah, they ate and they drank until the flood swept them all away. As it was in the days of Belshazzar, they ate and they drank until they saw the handwriting on the wall!

It was not some demagogue on a soap-box, yelling his head off in phrases caught up from Karl Marx which he did not half understand,—it was Herbert Henry Asquith, then prime minister of

Great Britain, who said, "I am speaking quite seriously when I say that in my judgment the gross and growing disproportion between the good purposes to which wealth might be devoted and the frivolous, worthless, and unproductive purposes to which so much of it is devoted, is one of the tragedies of our English life."

When this monarch of old called in his wise men and astrologers he found that they were blind and helpless in the presence of that august moral process which was being unfolded before their eyes. Self-indulgence robs its devotees of their insight, and they lose the power of recognizing the deeper meaning of human life. They could not read the writing nor make known the interpretation thereof.

But in the hour of his bewilderment the queen mother reported to Belshazzar that such knowledge could be had. "There is a man in thy kingdom," she said, "in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of thy father, light and understanding like the wisdom of the gods were found in him."

And when this man, the hero of these stories,

the prophet Daniel, a man of clean life and honest purpose, was brought, he could read the writing and make known the interpretation. If any man, anywhere, at any time, has the will to do His will, he shall know. He made known to those frightened banqueters the meaning of that mysterious handwriting which they had seen upon the wall.

But it was too late. They had sinned away their day of grace, and the doom which was written yonder was not delayed for an hour. "In that same night Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, was slain, and Darius the Mede took the kingdom." Weighed, Wanting, Numbered, Finished! It was a terse, tense statement of the sure outcome of any life of careless, godless self-indulgence.

"The way of the transgressor is hard." The fingers of the Almighty have written that statement across the whole face of human life in a very plain hand. The direful consequences which follow swiftly upon the breaking of his laws furnish a strong hint to wicked men that they are off the track.

This applies not only to the coarse sins of the

flesh, drunkenness and gluttony, murder and licentiousness, stealing and lying. It extends also with equal force to the more subtle forms of evil-doing, selfishness and greed, moral indifference and spiritual sloth.

The man whose prevailing mood is cynical, skeptical, flippant, is in peril. He is already doomed by the quality of life which those moods produce. He has already been "snapped back" to the moral level of the ape, the tiger, and the hog. All wrong-doing is dangerous—it destroys manhood, and God is against it. "Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God!" They are the convex and the concave sides of the same shield of moral interest in the welfare of mankind.

Let men sit at their feasts if they will, and eat the fat and drink the sweet and rejoice in the bounty of a benign Providence! But let them keep their eyes on the wall and watch for those words of warning which may be written there again for our instruction! It is as dangerous to-day as it was in the time of Belshazzar for an individual or a nation

or a social order to fall into the easy-going habit of finding its pleasure mainly in those forms of satisfaction which are "material, momentary, and trivial." It develops a quality of life which will neither stand nor last. "Our God is a consuming fire," and when such chaff and stubble are brought into His presence they are burned up.

We may take those words of the Master which were first addressed to the individual, and apply them to society as a whole. Every social order which heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock. The rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew and beat upon that house—the hard tests came as they always come—but it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. It was built right, built in harmony with the law of God, and it stood.

And every social order which heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not,—the social order which is not striving to realize those principles of human brotherhood in terms of economic life,—I will liken unto a fool who built his house upon the sand. The rain descended,

the floods came, the winds blew and beat upon that house,—the hard tests came here also,—and it fell, and great was the fall of it. It was built wrong; it was built in open defiance of the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and it went down in disaster.

Here in the streets of any great city one will see contractors digging down resolutely through fifty feet of dirt and sand, if need be, to set the foundations of their sky-scrapers on bed-rock! And here in the streets of that same city one will also see multitudes of people, old enough to know better, building their life structures, and those sections of the social order for which they are responsible, upon the shifting sands of moods and whims, upon easy-going customs and unproved assumptions. It is a thousand times more dangerous than it would be to set the Woolworth Building of New York in a swamp. When the hard tests come, that sort of life will collapse. That whole philosophy of life is like a house of cards, so far as offering any real support goes. Over against that line of action, there is written by the fingers of a divine hand the same four fateful

words, WEIGHED, WANTING, NUMBERED,
FINISHED.

“For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard;
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard:
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the law:
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.

Far-called, our navies melt away,
On dune and headland sinks the fire;
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.”

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart;
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart:
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,"
Lest we forget, lest we forget."

THE END

